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*ADVENT TO WHIT SUNDAY*

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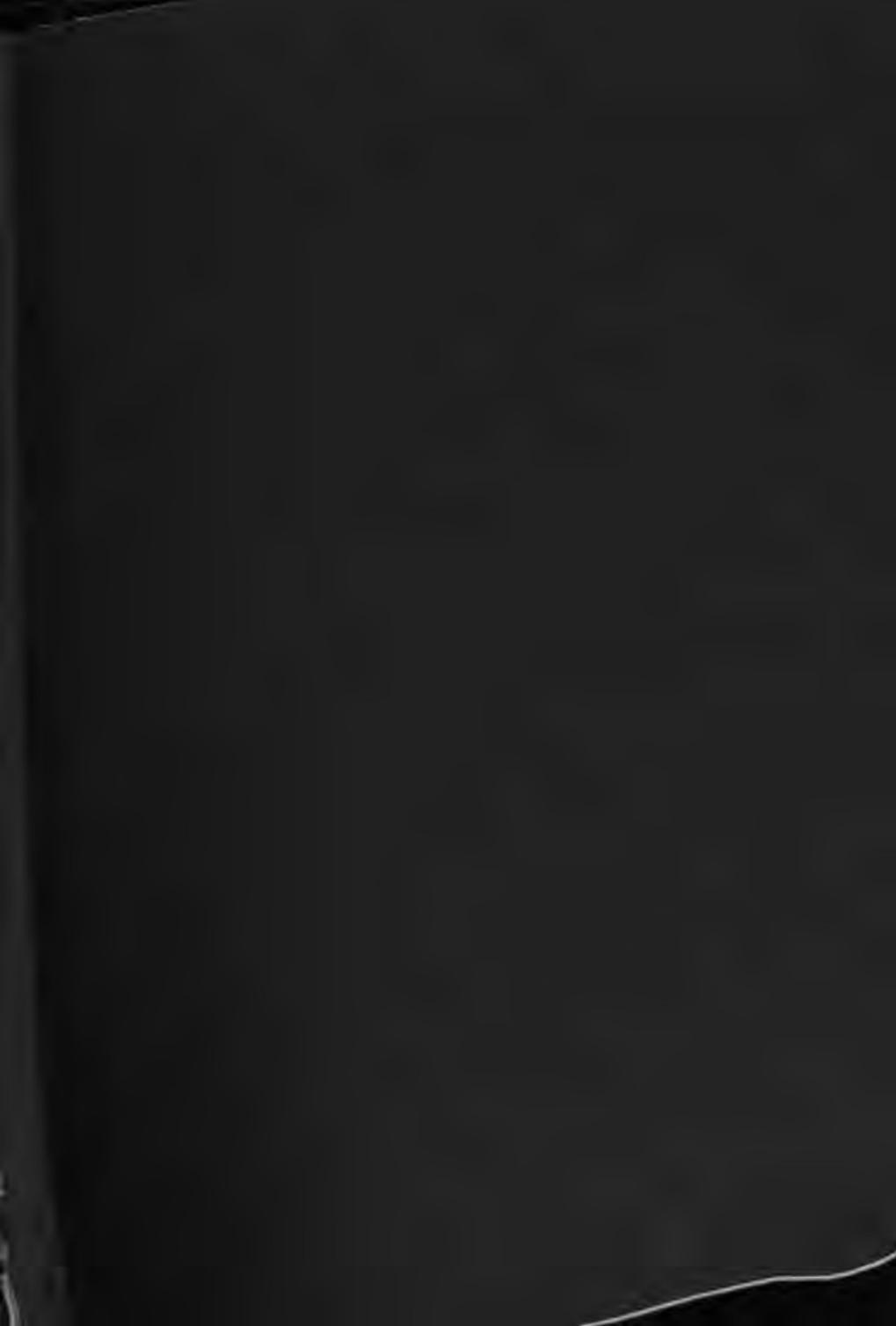
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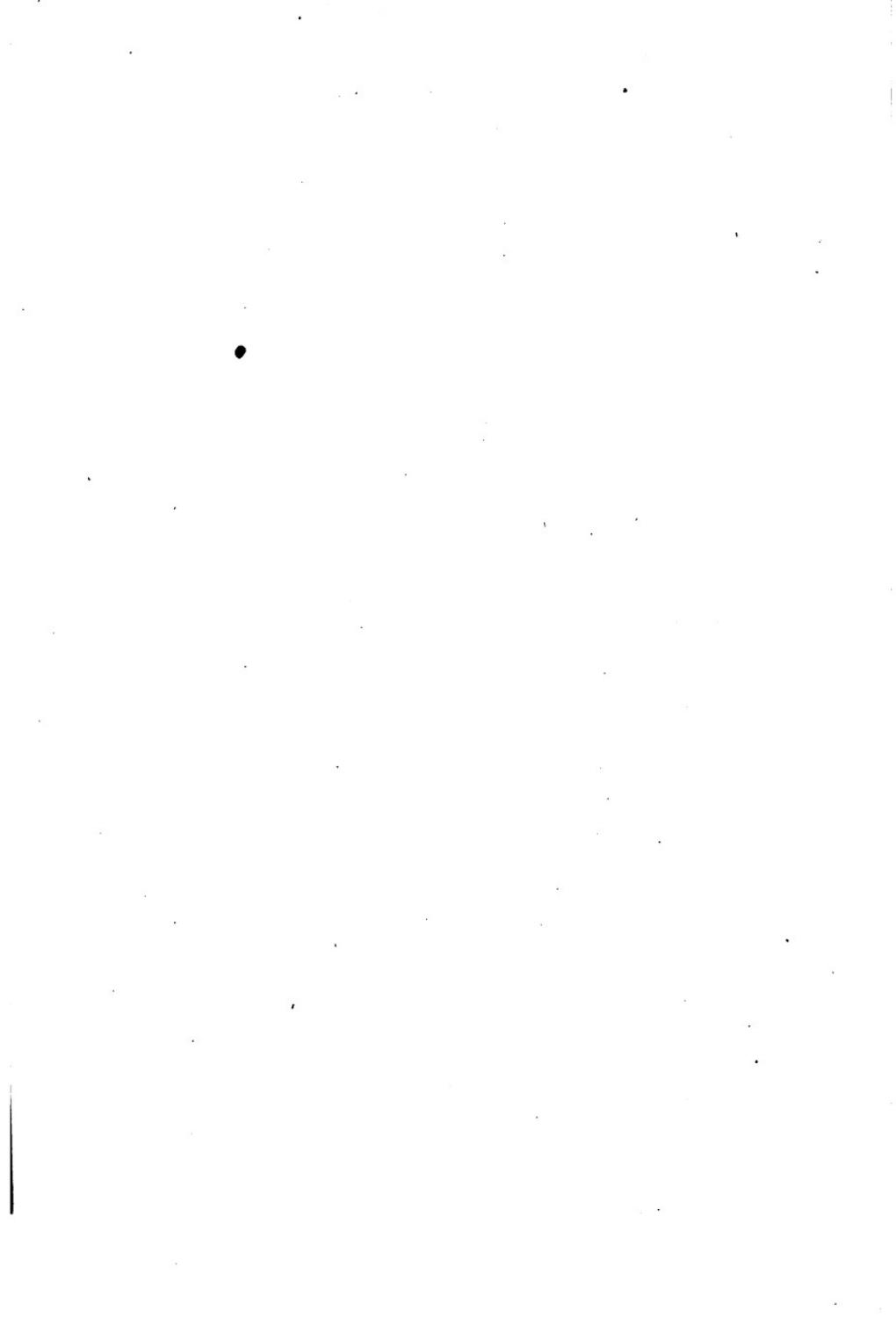
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## *HELPS AND HINDRANCES*

20

## *THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.*



HELPS AND HINDRANCES  
TO  
THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

*PLAIN VILLAGE SERMONS  
FOR A YEAR.*

VOL. I.

*Advent to Whitsunday.*

BY

F R A N C I S E. P A G E T,  
RECTOR OF ELFORD.

*SECOND EDITION.*

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25, 1. -

TO

THOSE OF THE FLOCK, LONG SINCE COMMITTED TO MY TRUST,  
WHO,

IN DAYS OF PERIL AND PERPLEXITY

FOR PRIESTS AND PEOPLE,

DESIRE TO HOLD THE TRUTH

IN UNITY OF SPIRIT, IN THE BOND OF PEACE, AND IN

RIGHTEOUSNESS OF LIFE;

A FLOCK WHICH,

FOR WELL-NIGH FORTY YEARS,

HAS BORNE MANIFOLD INFIRMITIES WITH PATIENCE,

AND NEVER STINTED ITS ACTS OF KINDNESS AND REGARD

TO ME AND MINE,

THESE SERMONS, PREACHED IN THAT CHURCH,

WHICH WE ALL LOVE SO WELL,

ARE DEDICATED

BY THEIR VERY GRATEFUL AND AFFECTIONATE SERVANT

IN CHRIST,

FRANCIS E. PAGET.

ELFORD,

*Advent, 1873.*



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## SERMON I.

### THE DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS.

(FOR ADVENT.)

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“... *The Desire of all nations shall come.*”

THE dispensations of God sometimes, and to some extent, are, for our warning, permitted to repeat themselves. That which hath been shall be again.

“A little while,”—(four hundred years at least, it was),—“A little while,” said the Voice of Him Who is from everlasting to everlasting, “and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come. And I will fill this House with glory, saith the Lord of Hosts.” And so it came to pass. When nation after nation, through all the then known world, had been shaken and shattered, first by the breaking up of one dynasty after another, and then had been crushed and humbled by the irresistible armies of

all-conquering Rome ; when all the old idolatries had been stamped upon, if not stamped out, by the hoof of the conquerors' own form of misbelief ;—when the power of heathen Rome had dispossessed Dagon, and Baal, and Ashtoreth of their old dominion ; and the triumphant Romans had so learnt to exult over the deities of other nations that they scarcely worshipped their own, except as a form, and with a sneer ;—when heathenism itself, in spite of its thousand gods, had become utterly godless, and had found that amid all their gorgeous temples there was not one to plead for them, none to help, none to deliver—then, in that crisis of the fortunes of the world, in that death-agony of misbeliefs, “the Desire of all nations came,” came, but in great humility ; and the promise, “I will fill this House with glory,” was accomplished, when a little helpless babe was borne by a poor woman into the sanctuary of the most despised nation upon earth, and an old man, taking the infant into his arms, blessed God, as he declared that now he should depart in peace, since his eyes had seen the salvation of God, “the Desire of all nations,” the light which was to lighten the Gentiles, the destined glory of Israel.

And now, brethren, as I have already said,

that which hath been shall be again, and there shall be a second coming, not however, as at first, in great humility, but as we are reminded to-day, in power and great glory. Once He came to *save*; but He will return to *Judge*.

Once He was the Desire of all nations, even though when He came unto His own, His own received Him not, and was in very truth despised and rejected of men.

Nevertheless, of this there can be no doubt, that the world, by woful experience, had learned its need, had found out its want of a Saviour.

Alas, how is it now? His first coming was looked to with desire. Ask your consciences whether you look to His second coming with anything but dismay and dread! It took four thousand years to make men feel their want of a Saviour: it has taken but half that time to make one moiety of those who, nevertheless, call themselves by His name, to live in practical unbelief, and the other moiety to regard His second coming with terror, and not with joy.

And now, what was it that made Him the *Desire* of all nations,—which set them, ignorantly, mistakenly, blindly, in a rude fashion no doubt, but still honestly, to feel after Him, if haply they might find Him?

It was this : they wanted some hope, some refuge beyond this miserable world. They had felt the full brunt of its crimes and cruelties, in no wise softened, as they are to us, by the very influences of that Faith which, nevertheless, we do not allow to rule our hearts ; they had to bear with unutterable wickednesses and abominations which, for the most part, are kept out of sight among ourselves ; they had to endure the sumless agonies of a life which had no redeeming hopes within, to make up for the miseries without. Their present was dark ; their future was darker still. In pain they had no alleviation ; in trial no staff on which to lean ; in sorrow no comfort ; in bereavement nothing to dry their tears. The pleasures of sin for a season—*that* made up their life. And death was unredeemed with one single ray of brightness. Remorse they might know ; despair might haunt them : but of the peace and consolations of a faithful follower of Jesus, they had never tasted. No wonder that a Saviour from themselves, and from sin and death, was the “*Desire of all nations.*”

Well, He came among them ; and they soon scorned His humility, hated His purity, loathed His self-denying holiness, and perfect submission to His Father’s Will. And so they could find no

beauty in Him to desire Him, Who yet had been “the Desire of all nations.” And then they crucified Him.

And *we* have been crucifying Him ever since ; treading under foot the Son of God, His laws and statutes, and counting the blood of the Covenant whcrewith we are sanctified, as though it were of no more value than an unholy thing ; by our living, in the main, after the fashions of that world which, as followers of Christ, we have renounced.

But, meanwhile, time is speeding on, and once more Advent admonishes us that the night is far spent, and the day is at hand. Ours is the last twilight of the world. Ages ago we were warned that we were in the last times. It cannot, therefore, but be that the wintry storms of human crime and folly are almost ended ; that the down-pour of trials and miseries is nearly over ; that the tide of tears will not flow on much longer ; that the everlasting Spring is at hand, and the Home in view, where tears will be wiped from off all faces, and this wicked world, which we have so filled with evil, shall be no more our snare and our corrupter.

And so we are brought once more to the thought of that second coming of Him Who, at

His first coming, was the Desire of all nations. He that cometh “surely will come, and will not tarry.” To *that* we must look ; for the signs of that coming we must watch. And, as before the first Advent, it was the will of Providence to prepare the way—“A little while and I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land, saith the Lord of Hosts”—so before the *last* shall, for some short space, be the direst time of trouble which this troubled world shall ever see ; the last struggle between good and evil, between belief and unbelief—such a fiery trial that were it not shortened, there should be no flesh saved.

It is, I think, impossible to contemplate the signs of the times, and the rapidity of the progress of all ungodliness and unbelief, and not come to the conclusion that the end is at hand—yea, at our very doors.

And so I would most earnestly put the question to every one of you—Are *you* preparing for that coming ? Does the thought of it only fill you with dismay ? Or, are you *trying*, at least, to *desire* your Lord’s return ? It is only in the way of watchfulness and prayer that that desire can be attained. Are *you* “praying always, with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and

watching thereunto with all perseverance"? I do beseech you, as men who are forewarned that "the Lord is at hand," to offer this petition continually—"We believe that Thou shalt come to be our Judge: we therefore pray Thee help Thy servants, whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy most precious Blood." Amen.

## SERMON II.

### WAITING FOR THE LORD'S COMING.

(FOR ADVENT.)

2 THESSALONIANS i. 9, 10.

*"... Ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come."*

VERY bewildering, and even contradictory, must have seemed the language of the Apostles, and even of our blessed Lord Himself, to those who first heard it, with respect to His second coming.

Even to us who have now the key to what was then so dark, and who understand the double meaning of an expression which sometimes refers to the coming vengeance on Jerusalem, and its destruction by the Roman armies ; and sometimes to the Lord's coming to judge the world at the last day, it is not always easy to distinguish which event was spoken of. At the first it would be, as it was intended to be, impossible ; and it may be permitted to doubt whether the Apostles them-

selves comprehended the full meaning of their own inspired words.

It was some twenty years after our Lord's Ascension, that St. Paul wrote the Epistle to the Thessalonians from which the text is taken, and which seems to say very plainly, that he and they (iv. 15) would be alive at our Lord's second coming. Then, a few months later, he writes in his second Epistle to the same Church, that they were not to be troubled as though "by word, or by letter" from him, "that the day of Christ is at hand."—Ten years afterwards he announces to the Philippians, "the Lord *is* at hand," and speaks of himself as "looking" for "the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven." In the year following, he reminds Titus, that "the grace of God hath appeared to all men," teaching them "to look for that blessed hope, the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ." About the same time, St. Peter exhorts those to whom he wrote to be "looking for, and hastening *the coming* of the day of God," as though, in some sense, the time depended on themselves. And lastly, thirty years after that, St. John, the beloved disciple, declares, "Behold, He cometh with clouds;" and he brings the book of the Revelations to a close, with these

words, “ He which testifieth these things saith, surely I come quickly. Even so come, Lord Jesus.” And you must bear in mind, that while some of the passages which I have quoted from St. Paul certainly referred in their first sense, at any rate, to the destruction of Jerusalem, the language of St. John, which is identical with it (so far as the *speedy* coming of the Lord is concerned), was used many a year after not one stone had been left on another in Jerusalem ; her Temple was burnt, her children in captivity, her house “ desolate.”

The first Christians, therefore, had large excuse for their mistake in looking to the Judgment-day as to an event close at hand, and often in their miseries, they must have been tempted to utter the impatient cry, “ How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge, and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth ?”

We, my brethren, have gone into the other extreme, that of cold, hardened unbelief ; and because the Lord delayeth His coming, we speak as though all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation ; as though, in fact, the day of judgment would never come, forgetful of that most solemn warning, that when men feel quite sure that it will *not* come, *then* it *will*.

Assuredly it *will* come, and come *soon*, whether you and I live to see it or no. This was truth when Apostles, in their day wrote of it, and by the lapse of eighteen hundred years it *must* be still *truer* truth now. *Our* duty, as St. Paul taught the Thessalonians, is to *wait* for it. The two doctrines which he most pressed upon those to whom he wrote and preached, were first, Jesus and the Resurrection ; and secondly, the certainty that God would judge the world, by That Man whom He had ordained.

And *they* were bidden, and *we* are bidden, to lead lives in preparation for it,—to *wait* for it, as close at hand ; because we have the assurance of Him who cannot lie—“Behold, I come *quickly*,”—yea, that in some sense or other, “it will come, and not tarry ;” and though it should tarry, we must wait for it.

“*Wait.*”—Now think of the full force of that word : consider what it implies. First and chiefest, it *must* be an act of Faith. If you do not believe that your friend is coming to visit you, you will not wait for him ; you will not postpone your meal, for instance, till his arrival ; you will go on as you usually do, without him. But other things besides belief are contained in that act of waiting ; you will listen for him, look out for him, go forth, it may be, to meet him,

prepare to receive him, and so *welcome* him. If waiting for an earthly friend implies all this, can it be *less* where Christ the Judge of quick and dead is concerned, and where your fate for all eternity depends upon the condition in which He then finds you? “Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that *wait* for their Lord, that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when He cometh, shall find watching.”

But again, look at that work of waiting from another point: look at it as the certain fore-runner of some event, though the time of that event as doubtful. The suspense of such waiting is always held to be the most terrible trial to which any of us are exposed. Those who have had the miserable experience of seeing such things, declare that criminals endure more tranquilly the knowledge that their lives will *not* be spared, than the doubt whether they will or no: the waiting for the chance of a reprieve is worse than death.

But, indeed, which of us does not know what *waiting* involves, who has watched beside the sick bed of some one very dear to us, when the issue of life or death is quite uncertain?

Who has not, before now, *waited* for a letter in a state of most miserable anxiety?

To wait, then, implies both hope and fear. And if any one who now hears me has neither hope nor fear in any strong degree, with respect to the Day of Judgment, such a person may be quite sure that he is not waiting for the Lord's second coming, as Apostles would have us wait. It is not that we deny that such a day will ever come, but we persuade ourselves that it will not come in our time, and so we consider ourselves safe. It may not come for a hundred, or a thousand years. No! but death will be upon each of us long before that. And death will most assuredly be the coming of the Lord, to the soul of every man that dies. Are you, then, each of you, waiting for death, expecting its arrival any day? And, if you are looking for it, are you looking for it as an enemy, or as a deliverer from the miseries of this sinful world?

It is our own fault, if we only contemplate that coming with dismay. Not in *that* spirit would the Apostle have us look at it, who bade us wait for the Son of God, from heaven, "Whom He raised from the dead, *even Jesus which delivereded us from the wrath to come.*"

## SERMON III.

### THE ONE LORD, AND HIS NAME ONE.

(FOR ADVENT.)

ZECHARIAH xiv. 9.

" . . . In that day shall there be one Lord, and His Name one."

WHEN the Prophet so wrote, this was, perhaps, the most unlikely thing that could happen, for, with the exception of the Hebrew race, and that by no means free from the same taint, the whole world was given up to *idolatry*; to the service, such as it was, of innumerable idols of wood and stone. There were in truth, as St. Paul expresses it, "Gods many, and Lords many." But among all the false gods of the heathen (and they might be counted by thousands) there was not one who could be said to have the pre-eminence. Great was Diana of the Ephesians in aftertimes, but it was at Ephesus only. The most solemn oath of an Egyptian was, "By Him who sleeps in Philoe," but the awe of that name did not extend beyond the banks of the Nile. And so with all

the other devils of heathendom, the blind homage paid them was *local*, confined to one district only, not co-extensive with the world, not universal. Rome, as a matter of policy, set her own idols above those of the nations whom she conquered; but the “setter forth of strange gods” was not listened to with any great interest. If any change in national worship was made, it was in the way of *addition*, not of subtraction; the number of false gods was increased, not lessened; and so prolific was superstition, that, as we know was the case at Athens, they actually went the length of raising an altar to an “unknown God.”

Nothing, therefore, could be more improbable, when Zechariah prophesied, than that a day should come when “JEHOVAH should be *king over all the earth*,” when there should be “one JEHOVAH, and His name one.”

And certainly, when we contrast the few miserable hundreds of millions of Christians of all sects and professions united, with the ten thousand millions of idolaters and misbelievers, we may well sigh to think how far the prophecy still is from being fulfilled. Nevertheless, this fact is at least indisputable, that wherever civilization is most advanced and extended, and

knowledge most free, *there* “the Name of Jesus is above every name;” *there* “there is but one God the Father, of Whom are all things, and we in Him ; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom are all things, and we by Him ;” the *tendency* now is towards the fulfilment of the prophecy, however slowly ; not as it was till our Lord had come, and died, and risen, and ascended, more and more away from it.

I know not how it may be with those who hear me, but to myself the prophecies of Zechariah are the most darkly obscure, and the most utterly mysterious (with the exception of the half-dozen predictions fulfilled in the person of our blessed Lord, and familiar to everybody) of the whole mass of predictions which the Bible contains.

But, of all the prophecies of Zechariah none, as it seems to me, is at once so remarkable and yet so difficult, as that of which the text is a portion. Read it, and it seems plain enough : examine it carefully, and it retreats into the most profound darkness ; at first sight it looks like a prediction involving the most literal fulfilment ; consider, and meditate upon it, and (with reverence be it spoken) such a fulfilment seems physically impossible. Like the day there

spoken of, the light is neither clear nor dark ; it is not day nor night. Only we have the blessed assurance to rest upon, that the darkness shall eventually pass away, and that “it shall come to pass that at evening time it shall be light.”

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” After that purity of heart let us strive, simple trust, implicit faith ; so let us be content that what is now dark shall, for the present, remain dark. The gathering of all who have ever lived or died, before the Judge, at the Mount of Olives ; the twofold shifting of the mountain itself ; the gush of waters for some undefined purpose, (waters known to exist, but confined as yet within the vaults beneath the old Temple)—these things, let us be content to pass by without further inquiry. The day will declare it : at evening time it shall be light. And, as, at this Advent season, we contemplate the consequences of the Lord’s first coming, in preparing the way for His second, let us fix our eyes on that part of the prophecy which is so clear, that he who runs may read it, so plain that “wayfaring-men, though fools shall not err therein.” “The Lord,” that is, JEHOVAH, “shall be king over all the earth : in that

day there shall be *one Lord*, and His *Name one.*"

Of all the prophecies in Scripture, there is none so often repeated for the comfort of the faithful, in more various forms, than this. Never more strikingly, perhaps, than in Ezekiel : "I the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David, a prince over them : and I will make with them a covenant of peace," . . . . "and I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David, and he shall be their shepherd." So Daniel : "In those days shall the God of heaven set up a kindom which shall never be destroyed ; it shall stand for ever." So Isaiah, in a score of passages which you will all remember ; so David himself, and indeed all the prophets, till we come to the visions of the Apocalypse, and behold Him who is "King of Kings and Lord of Lords," going forth conquering and to conquer ; and the faint echoes reach our ears (not less awful because as yet so faint,) of the voice of the great multitude, as the sound of many waters, and of mighty thunders, "Alleluia ! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth ;" and "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever."

So far the light of this world's eventide falls upon the prophecy of Zechariah : " There shall be one king over all the earth ; in that day there shall be one Lord, and His Name one." The light, indeed, as yet is not clear, nor yet dark ; we have not the brightness of day, but yet it is not *night* ; and the promise is that in the evening time it shall be *light*. Towards *that*, every hour which passes prepares the way ; towards that, all things, as it seems to me, are rapidly hastening on. What, then, are *we*, my brethren, doing, to hasten or delay the wheels of His chariot, Whose second advent we profess to expect speedily ? Is He *our King*, to whom we yield ourselves servants to obey ? What are we doing by prayer, by example, and by the use of all the talents, and all the means, which God has bestowed on us—be they many or be they few—to hasten the coming of that kingdom ? What are we doing towards making it *one* ? towards keeping the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life ? God give us all grace to lay aside our hatreds and prejudices, and whatsoever else is hindering us from godly union and concord, that as there is but one body, and one spirit, and one hope of our calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, so

we may be all of one heart, and one soul, united in one holy bond of truth and peace, of faith and charity; and may with one mind and one mouth glorify Him, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## SERMON IV.

### THE TRIALS OF THE LAST TIMES.

(FOR ADVENT.)

2 JOHN ii. part of v. 18.

*"Little children, it is the last time."*

IT has always seemed to me that a tone of inexpressible sadness pervades St. John's addresses to his "*little children*" in Christ Jesus ; to the "*young men* ;" and to the "*fathers* ;" that is to say, to the newly converted ; to those of more matured convictions ; and to those who, among his flock at Ephesus, had for years been rooted and grounded in the Faith.

His eagle-eye had long pierced futurity ; he was well aware of what, even then, was coming ; he knew that the time of his own departure must, of necessity, be at hand ; and, in the intensity of his loving nature, he was full-filled with anxiety on their account.

And so his words to them are like the last brief farewells of a tender parent, when the energies of life are failing,—when the breath is becoming

fast and laboured, and the power of speech is ebbing away ; and when all that remains to be said must be condensed into a few loving, earnest words, never to be forgotten, but to be remembered and dwelt upon in after times, as giving a key for the fulfilment of imperfectly-expressed wishes, and as suggesting the principles on which intentions uncompleted should be carried out.

In those solemn words of affection then, we seem to have him, who was *once* the youngest,—*now* the eldest and sole-surviving,—and *ever* the best beloved, of the Apostles of the Lord, brought before us as though in actual presence.

In weariness and loneliness he had stood by himself, for years past, upon the earth ;—the last living man who had spoken with the Lord Jesus face to face, the last living witness who could testify to the whole truth in Him, *learned directly from Himself*. A *martyr* in will, though not in deed, he had been bathed in the boiling oil, and come forth uninjured : a *Confessor* in fact, though more than compensated for the ordinary privations of home and friends, which confessorship involves (for never was banishment so full of honour and Divine favour as Patmos had been to him), the Providence of God had still kept him on in this world. God had work for him.

to do, and therefore he was “immortal till his work was done.”

And, though longing, with yearnings unutterable, to be again in That Bosom on which he had rested once, he was content to wait God’s time, and to spend his last days in exhorting the Ephesian Christians to love one another. They had had their full share of the trials of the first age ; they had “borne” and had “patience,” and, for Jesus’ sake, “had laboured and not fainted.” And, better still, they had resisted “evil ;” and had “tried them which had said they were Apostles, and had found them liars.” But now, when he felt that he must soon leave those whom he had served and loved so long ; and that they would be as sheep among wolves, exposed at once to the fierceness of merciless persecution, and to the mists of bewildering error ; in the fulness of his anxious affection, he does his best, in a few earnest words, to steel them against the one, and forewarn them against the other.

And so those exhortations of his (though uttered such ages ago, and under a state of things which our own, as yet, scarcely, or only partially, resembles), fall on our ears like the tone of distant bells, soft, and sweet, and sad,—

yet still speaking to our hearts ; they come to us like the last faint perfume of the land, to a ship standing out to sea,—yet still with a fragrance for our own delight ;—like the last glimpse of a much-loved home, fading in the distance out of sight, yet still with the voice of home addressing itself to our best affections. Thus the beloved disciple's words, so gentle, and yet so brave, win their way to Christian souls, as stirring and vivid now as eighteen hundred years ago,—as true, and not less urgent now than then.

“ Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world ;”—so ran the first part of the Apostle's charge :—“ If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof : but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.” And having thus, as it were, set before those to whom he was writing, the source and ground of all the wickedness around them, indulgence, namely, of the flesh ; the eager seeking after the things of this life ; spiritual pride ; self-righteousness, and self-will ; he proceeds with the words which I have taken for my text : “ Little children, it is

the last time : and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now there are many antichrists ; whereby ye know that it *is* the last time.”

This, my brethren, is the first place of the four in which that awful name occurs, which describes that (whatever it may be,—be it a person, or the spirit of the age) which sets itself against (for that is the meaning of the word “anti”) *against* Christ. So restricted, and limited, every opponent of Christ and His Gospel has been an antichrist ;—Herod and Pilate, Annas and Caiaphas ;—Pharisees and Sadducees ;—Simon Magus and Elymas ; Hymenæus, and Alexander, and Nicholas, were antichrists ; and so were Arianism, and Mahomedanism, and a hundred other forms of heresy, down to the Mormonism of our own day. And so, my brethren, (which is, I suppose, the point that most nearly touches ourselves,) every evil temper which we indulge within us,—all that is “earthly, sensual, devilish,” are to our own souls “antichrists ;”—they oppose and exalt themselves *against* God, and His Christ.

When St. John wrote, because multitudinous forms of evil were tempting men from their allegiance, there were, as there have been ever since, “many antichrists.” From the hour indeed, when Christ was born into the world, it was

"the last time;" old things had passed away; there was no further dispensation in store: the Gospel kingdom then set up would endure unto the end; and from the hour when Herod sent forth and slew the infants that were in Bethlehem, in the hope that thereby he might destroy the babe Jesus, there have been no lack of anti-christs. But I think no one can read the prophecies of Daniel, of St. Paul in the second Epistle to the Thessalonians, and of St. John, especially in the book of the Revelations, without coming to this conclusion, that at the close of the "last days," or the "last time," there shall be a period, of no long duration, which shall be pre-eminently the very last time, as containing within it the worst elements of all preceding ages: and secondly, that then shall appear *the* antichrist, either a *person*, or a spirit of opposition to Christ, so utterly devilish, so full of the most intense wickedness, that all the antichrists that have preceded him shall, even collectively, be as nothing in comparison to him. And yet it is possible, (I fear probable,) that the world itself may have become so godless—so given up to unbelief, or so blinded by *misbelief*, and so debauched in morals, before that time comes, that when it does come, the mass of mankind will be

quite insensible to the iniquity of antichrist, and the world, maybe, will welcome him as its *Hero*, cherish him as the popular *Idol*, and perhaps adore him as its *God*! And this portentous form of evil, the last and worst, is that for which we must prepare ourselves before our Lord's last coming. Awestruck I shrink from the profane presumption of those who are not afraid to fix the very year *when* the antichrist shall appear and begin his reign ; and still more do I shrink from the fiendish uncharitableness which takes upon itself to say, *where* and *whence* we are to expect him. "So fools rush in, where angels fear to tread."

The more we live to Christ, the more in the spirit of St. John we love the brethren, the less is the risk, that if antichrist should appear in our day, we should be misled by him ; that we should fail to recognise him. By his fruits we shall know him. All his distinctive characteristics of evil have been pointed out by the sure word of prophecy, whereunto, if we take heed, we shall have a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in our hearts.

My brethren, I would bid you watch for antichrist ; to study well the signs that will precede

his coming; to have it vividly impressed upon your minds, in what ways, as it is predicted, he will oppose himself to, and be "against" Christ. But there I stop, and I turn from him to ourselves. "Little children, it is the last time." Is this a truth which you realize with any depth? Has it any effect on your lives? Are you so shaping your lives as that if, in the midst of this "last time" in which we live, the very last time of all should begin, it would find you prepared to say from the depths of your heart, "*None but Christ, none but Christ*"? Would it find you prepared to suffer the loss of all things for His dear sake? Yea, ready to shed your blood rather than deny Him? The prospect of what lies before those who shall not be removed from the evil to come, before antichrist appears, is inconceivably awful. "There shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to that time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved, but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." What a most merciful assurance! Our dear, loving Father will lay no more on us than we shall be enabled to bear! He who endured the Cross, will enable us to endure the wrath of antichrist himself, for Him!

"For the elect's sake those days shall be shortened," and with whom but with ourselves, does it rest whether we shall be of the elect or no? *His* prayer to the Father is that "of those whom the Father has given Him should He lose none."

"Little children, it is the last time." There is little *here*, at best, for which it seems desirable to live on; but when we look at the clouds that are gathering round us, and contemplate what the days of antichrist will be when we measure our weakness and infirmity, and mark the timid shrinking of poor flesh and blood from such things as shall then befall, I know no reason why we should not make the prayer that, if God so will, we may depart in peace before that dreadful time shall come. I do not doubt for an instant that when it *does* come, decrepit age, and timid women, and little children, will be made to triumph in the hour of trial; but still I know not why, from very distrust of ourselves, we should not cultivate that spirit which brought down the special blessing on Josiah of old, "Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord . . . . I will gather thee unto thy fathers . . . . into thy grave, *in peace.*"

## SERMON V.

### NO ROOM FOR CHRIST.

(FOR CHRISTMAS DAY.)

LUKE ii. part of v. 7.

" . . . *There was no room for them in the inn.*"

SO, by the ordering of Providence, that fell out at Bethlehem, which was to foreshadow all that has happened since. "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not."

At Bethlehem it was but an ordinary accident. The very limited means of accommodation in a poor village had been extended as far as they would go. Those who came first would be first served, or those who could pay the best, would be most carefully attended to. There was nothing blameworthy in this : there was no intentional slight, no rude rejection. On the contrary, what could be done was done : the travellers were not bidden to go elsewhere ; they were not left in the street to seek for lodgings in a winter's

night : what could not be found in the house, might, since nothing better could be offered, be found in an outhouse. And so the Saviour of the world was born in a stable, and cradled in a manger.

Needs not that there should have been blame to any one in this ; it was preordained of God, that from His cradle to His grave, He whose Birth we commemorate to-day should be " despised and rejected of men." But, what it behoves us to consider is this, that what occurred then undesignedly, has been repeated, of deliberate intention, ever since. That inn at Bethlehem was the type and similitude, to a greater or less degree, of every human heart that has ever beaten since. Who is there but must be constrained to own that while his heart has been swept and garnished for other guests, and all its chambers filled, the poorest, narrowest, least-honoured place about it has been allotted to Jesus ? The lamentable, but plain truth is this, that from first to last, the world which He hath made has found no room for God.

O, the millions upon millions of human hearts which He has sought to enter, but which have absolutely rejected Him, and the millions

more who grudge His coming to them, and would, if they owned the truth, be rather without Him than with Him ! To none but Him is unwillingness shown. Bethlehem was unable ; we, too many of us, are unwilling, to admit Him as our guest, Who has provided mansions for a multitude which no man can number, " and yet there is room."

Once He was the little helpless Babe, unnoticed and unknown : so He came at first. But now he comes to us in different guise. " We know Thee, who Thou art—the Holy One of God." At first He gave no sign of eagerness for admittance ; but now it is altogether different. He stands beside the door of every heart, and thus He makes His presence known :—" Behold, I stand at the door and knock."

Ah ! is He knocking still at a door locked and bolted and barred ? or have we thrown it back upon its hinges to give Him welcome admittance ? God grant that it may be so—that we have given up our hearts in their entirety to Him !—that our sole desire is that He should be in us and abide with us for ever !

But it is much to be feared that it is not yet the case with all. And so let us try to realize Who it is that knocks, and for Whom we are—

what shall I say, unwilling or careless?—to find room.

It is the majesty and greatness of the Guest that seeks admission—the awfulness of such an indwelling Presence—the restraints which It involves and lays upon us, which causes us to shrink from the contemplation of it, and to share the feeling of the Apostle when he exclaimed, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.”

But is He to seek admission, and are we to say that we have “no room”? That be far from us! For think Who it is that we should so turn away! “The brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express Image of His Person,” the Co-substantial; Co-eternal; Who was “made flesh, and dwelt among us;” He it is Who would tabernacle within us—no matter how fallen, how sinful, how degraded; He seeks admittance into every heart, that He may cleanse it, and sanctify it, and make it His own for ever.

Does such an act of condescension to each one of us personally, seem incredible? Reflect on what the events of this day testify that He has done for our race! God became man: the Highest became the lowest: the Creator made Himself a creature: the Almighty Ruler of the

Universe, a babe hampered in swaddling clothes,—the Lord of all, despised and rejected of men! Surely that is a sufficient answer as to His purposes and intentions. What He has done for the race, He desires to do for the individual—for you, and for me! He, who is very God, comes and knocks at our hearts, and asks of us to give him room.

God! think what that implies! Existence from all eternity: Power without bounds: Wisdom that is infinite: Holiness that is perfect: Love and goodness illimitable. Back, and back, and back, we throw our thoughts into the very farthest abyss and distance of time that we can conceive, and upon the inconceivable millions of millions of millions of years beyond that; and the most distant of them was to Him less distant than yesterday is to us. For ages innumerable, immeasurable, incalculable—long before any created thing existed, there was He, in the light inaccessible, in the glory and peace unapproachable,—the One sole existent, self-dependent, all-sufficient Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three Persons in the one Godhead.

And He the Son, God of God, light of light, it is, Who, as on this day, was the Babe laid in the manger of that stable at Bethlehem, because

there was no room for Him in the inn. And He it is Who now seeks to make His abode in us, and abide in us for ever.

And what shall I more say? Do but believe that all is, as you know it is, and further words will be needless. Welcome Him without reserve, and His love and grace will do the rest.

So now, for His dear sake, in ever-present thought of Him, let us draw closer, "each to his neighbour, all to God." Let us seek Him where most especially He may be found, for the strengthening and refreshment of our souls. Now, in meditation on the events of this holy time, amid the indulgence of home affections and cheerful re-union with those we love, let us realize more and more our need of His entire occupancy of our hearts. And as we adore the exceeding love which in His pitiful compassion He is showing to our souls—let us try to make that love of His the pattern of our own to those around us—yea, that we should love one another, and forgive one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath loved and forgiven us.

## SERMON VI.

### OF HIM WHO CHANGETH NOT.

(FOR THE LAST SUNDAY IN THE YEAR.)

HEBREWS xiii. 8.

*"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."*

WHAT a comfortable Scripture is this to contemplate, and wherewith to fill our minds, amid the last days of a year which has all but come to an end ! What a consolation, amid the uncertainties of the future, and the inevitable changes and chances which must ensue in the year upon which we are about to enter, to be able to rest in simple trust upon the unchangeableness of God our Saviour. "They shall perish, but Thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as a garment, and as a vesture shall Thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but Thou art the same; and Thy years shall not fail!"

Not many hours more, and another twelve-month in the world's annals—another twelvemonth in which we ourselves have each borne a busy

part,—another twelvemonth which has been agitated by so large a number of the sundry and manifold changes of this evil world, over which sin, and sorrow, and death have still held their triumphant sway, though doubtless it has perfected many a saint ; brought many a wanderer home ; and taken to rest, which will never more be disturbed, and to safety which will never know another misgiving, many a worn and weary pilgrim. A few more hours, and another twelvemonth will have come to an end, and will have joined the myriads of years that have gone before it : will have faded away, and died out, and perished from the visible creation, and no eye will rest upon it, but His Who is the Ancient of Days—Who, seated on His imperishable Throne, gathers up the ages of ages in the hollow of His Hand ; and, while every event which has taken place in them is known, and remembered, and recorded, counts them all but as a watch that is past,—Who is the Eternal, the Immutable, the Immortal ; the Almighty ; the Alpha and Omega ; the First and the Last ; the Beginning and the End ; Which was, and is, and is to come, “ Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.”

The year which is all but gone carries with it an indelible memorial of all that each of us

has thought, and said, and done, since it began its course ; and we know, each of us in his secret heart, how much of evil, and how little of good it has to testify with respect to us; how much has been done by us which ought not to have been done, how much has been left undone which ought to have been done. Our conscience tells us that in many things we have sorely offended God, and that if He were extreme to mark all that we have done amiss we should only have to abide His wrath.

For a sinner, then, who is ready to perish, what a blessed Scripture is this, that Jesus Christ is “the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.” To feel that he has such a refuge as THAT to which he can fly in his awful need, that to SUCH a stronghold, as a prisoner of hope, he can resort, in full assurance that, coming thither as a true penitent, he will not be forbidden to approach it, or, approaching it, be cast out ; to be satisfied that there is an anchor for his soul so sure and steadfast ; that so long as he does not cut himself adrift from it, it will never leave go its hold—what *can* bring greater comfort than this ? If Christ be *not* our all in all, if He were not willing to be all in all to us, for all our time here on earth, amid all the mass of sin and

sorrow in which our days are spent, there would be absolutely nothing to protect us from despair. But Christ is willing to be all this to us, "the same" to us that He was to our fathers, without caprice, without fickleness, with no variability, neither shadow of turning. His love is even as His eternity ; and as for His eternity, He is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

I need not dwell upon the "yesterday" of our blessed Lord's Godhead, save only to remind you that His purposes of mercy towards *us* were in the counsels of the Eternal Mind before the world began. I will rather call your thoughts to what He was in the days of His flesh, when the Babe of Bethlehem had grown, like one of ourselves, to manhood. As He then loved, and cared for, and toiled for, and sympathized with, and warned, and rebuked, and watched over His own, and kept them from the evil one, so He is still, now that He is sitting at the right hand of His Father ; and so He will be for ever. He will be for ever the same loving, tender, sympathizing, protecting, pitying, and yet, sin-hating High Priest and King. Time will affect His love, or His holiness; as little as it will affect His power, Who surveys all, controls all,

orders all, and makes all work out those unchangeable purposes which have been from everlasting.

And so, being the same to-day that He was in the yesterday of His earthly ministry, we are brought at once to a remembrance, so encouraging to ourselves, of that which was, all things considered, the most noteworthy feature of that ministry—I mean the way in which He invited sinners to Himself, not the falling only, but oft-times the utterly fallen. Think over His acts and words in the Gospels, and bear witness to the truth of what I say. His uniform declaration was that He was come to seek and to save that which was lost. The most spiteful charge against Him was, “This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.” And as He was yesterday, so is He to-day, and will be for ever. He regards the heart-broken publican, and the impure who abominate their impurity, now, as He did when He was on earth, and while He abhors the self-righteous, and self-sufficient, and the “God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men,” He is full of gentlest mercy to the returning prodigal. I do not mean that He makes light of sin, far, far otherwise ! No words with respect to *that*, so severe, so awful, so tremendous as His.

Think of what He says about “ plucking out the right eye,” of “ the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched.” I read no word of encouragemnnt, still less of comfort, in the Gospels, to any who trifle with Him, who trifle with their souls, who trifle with the little, little time, the few fleeting years, in which it is given to man to work out his own salvation.

And this I believe to be the most needful thing that I have to say to you. Look—I will not say to all your past years, my brethren, but to *this* year which is now visibly passing away from us—visibly dying out before our eyes—and take from my lips its most solemn parting question to you—Have you, during the last twelvemonth, been trifling with your souls? You are, by a whole year, so much nearer *death*; are you so much nearer Heaven? Are you letting the sands of life run out, your allotted years hurry away, while you are playing with time and wasting it, going on carelessly, if not wickedly, as if you were to live on here for ever?

I have spoken of Him on Whom rests our only hope of pardon and acceptance at last, as being “ the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.” But you must remember this, He is the same in all

things—not in love and mercy only to the penitent, but in severity to those who are living without Him, and do not try to obey Him. We acknowledge Him as our Redeemer; we look to Him as our Intercessor; but on what ground can we claim His mercy as our Judge? What have we in common with those on whom He bestowed it in the Gospel? Are we sorrowing much, believing much, loving much? Those are His terms, His conditions: and there are no others. *His* years cannot fail, ours are failing fast. What He was yesterday, and is to-day, He will be for ever; but we—we are fading like the withered leaves; our lives are passing away like a vapour; we bring our years to an end as it were a tale that is told; we know not what a day or an hour may bring forth, where any one of us may be ere morning. Not an hour passes but that for thoughts, or words, or deeds therein, we need to implore forgiveness; what then of years? And even when we have done our best, miserably unprofitable has been our service. Our times are in His hand, and, in spite of all our shortcomings, He would not only have us to be His servants, but His friends, members of His Body, partakers of His nature, sanctified by His Word and Spirit, inheritors of His wondrous pro-

mise, "Where I am, there shall my servant be."

Brethren, will you or will you not accept His offers? Years are passing away. Night is drawing on. Death cannot be far off; and our eternity, if not in Heaven, must be spent in hell!

## SERMON VII.

### A MESSAGE FROM GOD.

(FOR THE NEW YEAR.)

DEUTERONOMY xxxi. part of v. 14.

*“ . . . Behold, thy days approach that thou must die. . . .”*

**A** CHILLING, depressing, ill-chosen salutation you will call this for a new year, if, as I desire with all my heart, each person now present should appropriate it to himself, should take it, not as the communication of God to His faithful servant Moses, but as a New Year's message from Him to all who hear it, to vigorous manhood, as well as to feeble age; to the healthy as well as to the sickly; to those who have never known pain, as well as to those who are never free from it; nay, to those who have many, as we reckon many, years of life before them, as well as to those of us to whom God knows (though we do not know) that Jeremiah's awful words to Hananiah might be addressed, “This year thou shall die.”

You then, to whom the words of the text seem like a salutation foreboding ill, let me ask you to reflect why they seem so? Are they inconsistent with the heartiest desire that to whatever extent an uninterrupted succession of mercies and blessings are compatible with your growth in godliness, they may be yours in the largest and fullest measure? that you may be "blessed in the city, and blessed in the field, blessed in the fruit of your body, and the increase of your kine; blessed in your basket, and blessed in your store; blessed in your going out, and blessed in your coming in"? No, by no means. But what I desire most of all, is to help you so to keep the thoughts of what must come some time, and may come at any time, before you habitually, that you may so apply your hearts to that holy and heavenly wisdom while you live here as may, in the end, bring you to life everlasting; that you may learn to look at death calmly and trustfully, as an enemy whom Christ has robbed of his sting, that is, of power against you; not to turn away from his coming, as from an event of dread and horror, but as a passage to a joyful resurrection; that you may live in such preparedness for him, and expectation of him, that you may not

be dismayed at the sound of his approaching footsteps.

It is not the way of the world to do this. They who live chiefly for this world try not to think of death, because they would like nothing better than to live on here for ever; just as they avert their thoughts from heaven, instead of contemplating it, lest, if they should know its full blessedness, they should abandon their worldliness to attain it; just as they try to forget hell, lest, if they realized its anguish, they should so live as to escape it. But, my brethren, the shutting our eyes to the approach of death does not make him turn away from us, and therefore, our wisest and safest course is to prepare for his coming whether it be near or far off. Every one can repeat that perfect prayer—

“ Teach me to live that I may dread  
The grave as little as my bed :  
Teach me to die that so I may  
Rise glorious at the awful day.”

Why should we not wish and strive to attain to that state for which our lips petition? There is much need; for, depend upon it, there is a fearful amount of old heathenism in the manner in which many who call themselves Christians look at death.

From their commencement to their close, our lives are so frail, so liable to be extinguished at any moment, that our existence may be not untruly called a dying life, or a living death. What, under such circumstances, can be so needful, in order that dying we may live, as that we should live as about to die? And, as I have already said, by our Lord's triumph over the grave, death is robbed of its sting; why, then, should we make a new sting for ourselves? Yet this is what most of us do, through the way in which we accustom ourselves to look at death. St. Paul did not speak or think of it as we do. He desired to be absent from the body that he might be present with the Lord; to depart and be with Christ; which, saith he, "is far better." "We groan," says he, in yet stronger language, in another place, "we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house, which is from heaven . . . for we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." And the whole tenor of the Gospel, is to drive away and dispel all cheerless thoughts of death from the minds of those who are striving to live in the Lord.

I cannot repeat too often, that death does not occupy the place in the Word of God which it does occupy in that religion of ours, which professes to be derived from the Word of God. In the New Testament, death is simply treated as an abolished thing. “He hath *abolished* death,” the Apostle says, “and hath brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel.” The second coming of Christ is always, in the exhortations of the New Testament, substituted for death. Mark! I say *always*—not sometimes, but *always*. Death then is abolished, but, of course, only in the eyes of those who have living faith in Christ its conqueror; that faith, which looks not at the things which are seen, but the things which are unseen. Death to most men is so full of terror, because it brings things here to an end, and they see nothing beyond it. Death, in the eye of faith, is not the *end*, but the BEGINNING of all; it is the commencement of “the life that knows no ending.”

And so I would have you, my brethren, to look at it,—you who have been made members of Christ; who profess yourselves servants of Christ; who hope one day to see the face of Christ. And therefore it is, that to those who are servants of Christ, I say, not for their

alarm but for their encouragement, at the entrance of a new year, and as a remembrancer that so much of the weary struggle of this life is over. "Behold! thy days approach that thou must die!"

I am not forgetting who and what we are, that the saintliest can only be self-condemned and sorrowing penitents. The past we must leave to the mercy, the future to the Providence of God. There is but one hope for sinners, *in* and *through* the Blood of the Cross. But if Christ has robbed death of its sting, it does not behove us to look at death as if He had *not* done so. Let us view the approach of death as something which *He* means should bring us nearer to Him. So let us enter on the New Year, and make it a period for some such inquiries as these. For what purpose has God brought me thus far on my road? He has called others away to their account; why has he spared me? Is it not that I may repent; or that, if a penitent, I may deepen and perfect my repentance?

He has given each of us a respite, in order that we may grow in grace, and avail ourselves of the means of grace so earnestly and devoutly, as that we may "add to our faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and

to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity." For these purposes, my brethren, God in His tender love and pity has spared us: take we heed that the opportunity be not lost!

And, that it may not, we must pray Him to forgive us all the past, and to deliver us from its guilt, and its influences; we must pray Him to turn our hearts wholly to Him, and hold us close to Him now at this present, and that He will take our future, our unknown future, into His Hands. We must pray Him to spare us a little that we may recover our strength, renewing in us whatsoever has been destroyed by the fraud and malice of the devil, or by our own carnal will and frailness.

We must pray Him, since the days approach in which we must die, that death may not find us unprepared. And, as we look forward to the future, whatever it be, which may remain to us, "that road, of which we know not one single turn, that ocean of which we know not one rock, one shoal, or one storm, that may await us,"—we must commit our ways, and ourselves, simply into His keeping. Our times are in His hand: let us be content, let us be thankful that

so it should be. Let us not doubt that He Who hath begun a good work in us, will perform it unto the day of the Lord Jesus Christ, so that we be not wanting to ourselves. And since in the midst of life we are in death, and there is but one succour, but one Saviour, let this be our constant prayer as we contemplate it : "Thou knowest, Lord, the secrets of our hearts ; shut not Thy merciful ears to our prayer ; but spare us, Lord most holy, O God most mighty, O holy and merciful Saviour, Thou most worthy Judge eternal, suffer us not, at our last hour, for any pains of death to fall from Thee !

## SERMON VIII.

### “THY LIGHT IS COME.”

(FOR THE EPIPHANY.)

ISAIAH lx. v. 1 and 19.

“*Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.*”

“*The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory.*”

MORE than five-and-twenty hundred years have passed away since Isaiah delivered this prophecy, and nearly nineteen hundred since its accomplishment commenced.

It began to be fulfilled when the glory of the Lord burst forth upon the shepherds in their night-watch at Bethlehem, and they heard the tidings of great joy which was to be to *all* people—the birth of a Saviour—Christ, the Lord.

Thus the fulfilment began; it will only be complete when the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of God and His Christ.

For those tidings were not for Israel only, but

for heathendom too ; for the benighted, fallen world through all its length and breadth ; for all people, everywhere, through all ages, from that hour, till time shall be no more. "Darkness," saith the Prophet, "shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people ; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising."

Read that wondrous chapter from which the text is taken, and you will find in it the entire Gospel dispensation minutely described, more than seven centuries before it took its rise. There you will find the offers of salvation to the Jews, the calling of the Gentiles, and the blending of both into one communion and fellowship in the body of Christ our Lord. It proclaimed that God would have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth. It foretold the setting up of that Church (as we call it nowadays,) which should be co-extensive with the world, and be without restriction in her offers of privileges and grace. It told that she should be God's appointed means for the regeneration and renewal of our race, the channel of sacramental help and strength, the ark of refuge and safety amid the floods and tempests of this

troublesome world. It foreshadowed her rise from small beginnings, till she should become the mightiest of the earth, and gave promises to her, through which earth should be once more re-united to heaven. It was declared that, in the time to come, the abundance of the sea should be converted unto her, and that the distant isles should bring their tribute of willing homage. And because the Lord was to be her everlasting light, and her God her glory, it was added, as a most solemn warning, that "the nation and kingdom which will not serve her shall perish, yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted."

Such were the things foretold. And we consecrate this day in memory of the birthday of the Gentile Church, when the Eastern Magi offered their gifts and paid their homage to the Infant Jesus, and were not rejected, or turned away.

And now turn your thought to what might have been the state of things *here*, in the furthest region of the then-known West, when the star was resting over the manger-cradle at Bethlehem. Contrast the condition of our own people then, with what it is now!

Whether, amid the swamps and forests of inclement Britain, any portion of its scanty popu-

lation had a home where we now dwell, we know not; but if it had, of this we may be sure, that those who lived by our river-side were heathen savages, like all the other inhabitants of the land. They were without light, without hope, without God. If a religion of any kind they had, it was a worship of devils, with the usual rites of foul and bloody idolatry. Their deities, throughout the dreary regions of heathendom, were objects of terror, not of love, propitiated by abominations too revolting to be mentioned.

Such, through unnumbered generations, had been the condition of our forefathers; gross darkness everywhere; a race hateful and hating one another, unrestrained in deeds of lust and violence, revelling in confusion and every evil work.

Compare this with *our* condition who are assembled within these walls to-day.

First, *what* are we?

In profession, at least, we are believers in God and in Jesus Christ, Whom He hath sent. We hold that there is salvation in none but Him; that there is none other name under Heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved. We have accepted Him as our alone Saviour. We are members of Him; in covenant with Him; are partakers of His grace; have been regene-

rated by one of His Sacraments; have pardon, renewal, and such direct and close communion with Him in the other, that thereby we dwell in Him, and He in us; we are one with Him, and He with us.

Secondly, *where* are we?

Why, in a house which for ages has been dedicated to His service—where, day by day, we may meet, if so we will, to offer Him our prayers and hear His Word: where His Gospel is preached, the value of His precious blood-shedding proclaimed, the gifts of His grace set forth, and where the consolations of His promises, and His loving calls to the penitent, the world-worn, the weary and the heavy laden, are sounded forth continually in the ears of all.

And here, to-day, we are gathered together to hear of all His goodness to us Gentiles—of that mercy which has proclaimed that in “*every* nation, he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him.”

Well does it become us to cherish and set store by this festival of the Epiphany! And well might the Gospel Prophet, looking on to the time of the Lord’s manifestation to those who had been lying so long in gross darkness, and in the land of the shadow of death, exclaim, “Arise,

shine ; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord shall shine upon thee !”

“ Thy light is come !” “ The Lord is my Light and my Salvation, whom then shall I fear ? the Lord is the strength of my life ; of whom then shall I be afraid ? ” Surely this must express the feeling of every Christian as he finds himself in the Epiphany season once more. For weeks past, the warnings of Advent have been sounding in our ears, “ Prepare to meet your God.” And if, in an honest and a good heart we have done our best to prepare ourselves, it cannot be that Christmas and Epiphany will find us altogether unmoved. Rather our thoughts will be in the stable-cave at Bethlehem, contemplating its inmates—or, with the star-led travellers on their way to pay their homage—or, with the watching shepherds. With them our thoughts may linger ; and somewhat we may recall of “ the Light ” that came upon them ; of clouds dispersed, darkness ended, and the blaze of glory which dazzled and affrighted them ; and of the sweetness and grandeur of that solemn strain, “ as the voice of many waters,—the voice of harpers harping with their harps,” “ Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men.”

These, however, are only visions of the imagi-

nation which pass away, even as did that anthem which gladdened the shepherds' hearts, or the light which faded from before their eyes, when the angel's mission was ended. But when they are vanished, the great truth remains which concerns us all so nearly ;—" Thy light is come !" All that the mercy of God could do for us His creatures, is now accomplished. No fresh revelation of mercy is to be expected, no new message of good tidings will be proclaimed. Long the world lay in darkness ; but with the event of this season the Sun of Righteousness arose with healing in His wings. And thenceforth darkness passed away. The light is come ; and all who will, may approach the light. In Him is life, and that life is the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness, but alas ! the darkness comprehendeth it not. There are those who love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. Therefore, brethren, the question for ourselves is, are we walking in the light, as children of light ? are we taking heed that the light which is in us is not darkness ? We are members of the Church of Christ, and because we are, the injunction is laid on us, " Arise, shine ; for thy light is come." We are to arise and shine ; we must let our light *shine* before

men that they may see our good works and glorify our Father which is in Heaven. "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth ; but if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin."

Our light is come ! Take we care to gather brightness from it, to walk in its beams. *Our* light is come ! Happy we, for there are millions upon millions on whom as yet it hath never dawned. Take we heed that our abundant privileges do not serve to increase our condemnation. Our light is come ! let us gaze on it ; lift up our hearts to it ; prize it, follow it ; and as the star in the East led the wise men, in their simple faith, to undertake a lengthened pilgrimage in order that it might bring them into their Saviour's presence, so let the light which we have be to us an ever-ruling guide ; let it stablish our steps, and direct our course, amid the rugged dangerous paths of this troublesome world, till at length it brings us to the light of everlasting life ; to the fulness of that eternal day—which shall know no setting sun, nor waning moon,—where God the Lord shall be unto us an everlasting light, and our God the glory.

## SERMON IX.

### THE RICHES OF CHRIST.

(AFTER EPIPHANY.)

EPHESIANS iii. part of v. 8.

" . . . *The unsearchable riches of Christ.*"

THESE, whatever they are, are the gift of God to us Gentiles, a gift insured to us by that event which the Gentile Church commemorates at this season in her festival of the Lord's Epiphany, the manifestation and showing forth of the Saviour of the world, and His acceptance of the homage of the wise men of the East, the first Gentiles who approached Him.

And of all the gifts which God has bestowed on the human race, there is not one with respect to which such remarkable language has been used in Scripture as this. It is spoken of as something which had been concealed in the bosom of the Eternal Father, as too precious to be exposed to irreverent eyes and unbelieving hearts till, in the fulness of time, it should be

poured out, as a flood of mercy, to give new life to a perishing world. It was a thing which would rouse the jealousy of the *Jew*, who would grudge that any should share with himself, the privilege of God's especial favour. It was a thing which would be but "foolishness" to the *Gentile*, until the conviction of his sinfulness and helplessness slowly led him to the belief that he needed a Saviour. Above all, it was a thing to excite the active malice of the devil, and his obstructing craft, since his dominion over this fallen world would be brought to an end by the Incarnation and Atonement of the Son of God.

And so this gift is called in the Epistle to the Romans, "the *mystery* which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made known to all nations for the obedience of faith :" in that to the Colossians, as "the *mystery* of God, and of the Father, and of Christ :" and in that to the Ephesians, (where the subject is most largely dealt with,) as "the *mystery* of His will . . . that in the fulness of time He might gather together in one, all things in Christ, which are in heaven, and which are on earth :" as "the *mystery* which, from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God . . . according

to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord ;” and, more fully still, as “the *mystery* of Christ, which, in other ages, was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy Apostles and Prophets by the Spirit, that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the Gospel, whereof,” continues St. Paul, “I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me, by the effectual working of His power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.”

To *us*, then, hath this been preached. But how strange an expression! What is it to preach “riches?” and if these riches be unsearchable, that is, out of search, where is the use of preaching them? California and Australia would have kept their gold, had it been out of discovery and reach. There is no attraction towards that which is not to be had.

It is a strange expression that of “unsearchable;” and stranger still in the language in which St. Paul wrote than in our English version; for in the Greek it means something

which leaves no trace of its footsteps, and cannot be tracked. Twice only does the word occur in the New Testament. Here, where it is rendered “unsearchable,” and in the Epistle to the Romans, where it is said (xi. 33) of God’s ways, that they are “past finding out.” This last rendering, however, helps us to the true meaning. The riches of Christ are so vast, so various, and so precious, that they are “past finding out;” beyond human skill to reckon them up, or to calculate their full value.

But now what are these riches of Christ, and what are they to us? If the Lord who has them in possession, kept them by Him in the storehouse of heaven ; if, in the deep tranquillity of His measureless eternity, He sits surrounded with “power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing,” but never communicates the benefits of them to His creatures, they would be nothing to us. Till He comes near to us to bless us, as our Immanuel, “God with us ;” till we know that He feels for us, and with us, and has prepared the best of His good things for them that love Him, He is too far above us, and removed from us, to incline us to desire much to receive of His fulness.

But what are His riches? Hear His own Word. They are "riches of grace," of free mercy, and willing favour; "redemption through His blood," "the forgiveness of sins." "The riches," writes St. Paul to the Colossians, "of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, is *Christ in you* (or among you) *the hope of glory.*"

From whom? and for whom? *From Him*, who, while hating sin, out of His boundless love and pity, found the means of redeeming sinners. *For us*, who are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.

To *us* are offered "the unsearchable riches of Christ." It would have been much if some few crumbs from His table had been allowed *us*; if we had never been rebels; never fallen, never sinned; but it was when we had actually become His enemies, that God was pleased to reconcile the world to Himself! And even more than this, He laid His glory by; He stripped Himself of all His wealth of blessedness, in order to make Himself our brother, and visit us in our low estate. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye, through His poverty, might be rich."

And now contrast for a moment His riches

with the glittering dust on which we set so much store. *His*, the source of all good ; ours the very root, and trunk, and branches, flower and fruit, of all evil. *His* freely given ; ours slowly, painfully, and, for the most part, guiltily acquired. *His* an unfailing spring of rest and peace ; ours all care, and anxiety, and disappointment, and discontent. *His*, secure and everlasting ; ours either make themselves wings, or perish in the using. Not so the riches of Christ. Once ours, they are ours for ever. If we do not ourselves wilfully waste them, or throw them aside, they will not vanish away ; none shall be able to pluck them out of our hand. Unlike earthly possessions, we can carry them away with us when we die ; ay, and they will be more precious still when we have passed into eternity.

And this is the gift of God to us Gentiles ; to all who accept, as their Saviour, His beloved Son. It is not that we *may* have the riches of Christ ; we have them. Some, indeed, have had the offer of them, and like the Jews, rejected it. To some, the offer of a portion in them has not hitherto been made. There are dark places of the earth which the name of Jesus has never reached.

But not such is *our* condition. What privi-  
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leges, what mercies are ours! and, *therefore*, what responsibilities!

How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation? What shall we be but speechless, if, at the marriage supper of the Lamb, we be found without the wedding garment which He has Himself provided for us? Because of unbelief, some have been broken off; their day of grace is over; they have been cast aside as sapless, fruitless, withered. Oh, brethren, "be not high-minded, but fear; for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed that He spare not thee."

## SERMON X.

### THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES.

(AFTER EPIPHANY.)

LUKE xxi. part of v. 24.

" . . . Until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."

OUR thoughts have lately been directed to Him Who is not the God of the Jews only, but now of us Gentiles also. No sooner was our Blessed Lord born into the world than it was made manifest that He was come to be a light to lighten the Gentiles, as well as to be the glory (if so they would receive Him) of His people Israel. Henceforth in every nation, he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, shall be accepted of Him. It was the bestowal of the mightiest privilege which could be offered to a fallen world. Now then, let us contemplate those passages of Scripture which remind us that there is a limit to the period during which that privilege of which we think so little, and take so entirely as a matter of course, shall be continued to us.

God, for His own wise purposes, in devising and working out His scheme of mercy for the recovery of our race, had, in His secret counsels, before the foundation of the world, determined first, to choose for Himself a peculiar people, and to make them, for a while, the exclusive possessors of His especial favour and choicest blessings. But, secondly, He decreed that the races outside the pale, those to whom did *not* "pertain the adoption, or the glory, or the covenants, or the giving the law, or the service of God, or the promises, should, nevertheless, in His good time have the offer of His mercies in Christ Jesus ;" that they who were "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope; and without God in the world," should be brought nigh, by the blood of Christ ; that "the wall of partition" should be broken down ; that no portion of mankind should be shut out from the offers of salvation ; that none should be kept back as "strangers and foreigners," who desired to be "fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God"—that, in short, the Gentiles should be "fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promises in Christ by the Gospel ;" that to them, as to the Jews, should

be preached "the unsearchable riches of Christ;" that to the Gentiles also should be granted "repentance unto life."

The Jews rejected the Son of God, and in just retribution, their house was left unto them desolate. And then, my brethren, came our turn. "It was necessary," said the preachers of Jesus and the resurrection to the chosen people, "that the Word of God should first be spoken to you; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles."

"Hath God cast away His people then?" asks St. Paul. And he replies from the bottom of his heart, with the deep feeling of one who by birth was "a Hebrew of Hebrews," "God forbid!" He declares that they are still "beloved for the fathers' sakes, for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance;" that God "hath concluded all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all;" but that "if they abide not still in unbelief, they shall be grafted in again, for God is able to graff them in;" for that His good pleasure which He hath proposed in Himself is, that "in the dispensation of the fulness of times He may gather together in one, all things in Christ."

Read the 11th chapter of the Epistle to the

Romans (and I would earnestly beg of you to do so before this day is over, and while what I have said is fresh in your memories) and there you will see how, among his many warnings to the Gentiles, the Apostle of the Gentiles most plainly teaches them that their probation is for an appointed, determined, settled time. "Because of unbelief they (the Jews, that is) were broken off: be not high-minded, but fear; for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not thee!" And then he goes on to add to his urgent exhortation, a *prophecy*: "I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, *until the fulness of the Gentiles become in*. And so all Israel," (that is, I presume, that true Israel of God, in which there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all in all,) shall be saved."

There are many portions of the prophetic volume which seem to promise that, *at last*, after all their weary wanderings, and wide dispersion, the ancient people of God shall be gathered back to their own loved land, and exclaim, with streaming eyes, and exulting hearts,

"How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!" (The Lord grant it to them, and hasten the day!) And I quite believe, as I have often expressed to you, in better words than my own, that "where a literal interpretation of Scripture will hold, the explanation that is farthest from that, is, usually, the farthest from the truth;”\* nevertheless, it is well to bear in mind that the "heavenly Jerusalem," rather than the earthly, *may* be the promised possession. The all in all is that God's ancient people should recognise the Lord they denied, and so be gathered into His one fold. It is better never to speak positively how unfulfilled prophecy will be accomplished. Enough is revealed to keep alive our watchfulness; but not enough to gratify our curiosity. The thing for us chiefly to consider is, that it is quite possible that the conversion of the *Jews* may be *hastened* by *Christian* godliness, or *delayed* by the ill example and evil lives of us Gentiles. It may be suddenly effected by some wonderful interposition of Divine Providence; but, on the other hand, it may be that, by the loving efforts of us Christians, our elder brethren may be pre-

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\* Hooker.

pared for a return into the bosom of our common Father.

My present object, however, is to speak of the destinies of the Gentile church. And I say that our probation is for a fixed time. Our blessed Lord has declared that Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. She is still so trodden under the villainous hoof of the Moslem power (that power utterly rotten and decayed, and fast nodding to its fall), therefore the times of the Gentiles are as yet unfulfilled ; but when the Mahomedan rule is destroyed, we know what is to follow : a set time is then come to an end. So the predictions of Daniel seem to point in the same direction, when he speaks of the "consummation," in which that which is "determined shall be poured upon the *Desolator*" (Marg.) ; so elsewhere of the "accomplishment of indignation." And Isaiah holds the same language. The time when the probation of us Gentiles shall come to an end, and that in which the Jews will cease to abide in unbelief, shall be the same ; the two events will synchronize, as it is called, that is, will come together.

This is a terrible thought for us Gentiles, who have so miserably abused, who are now so abusing,

our day of grace, that it will not last for ever; that it has a limit determined by God.

There is, however, this comfort for every faithful member of the Gentile church, that St. Paul speaks of its "fulness," which leads to the hope that at the time of ingathering it will not exhibit a scant and deficient harvest; and we have that most blessed and cheering assurance that "that *great multitude* which no man can number," who will stand before the Throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and with palms in their hands, will be gathered out of "*all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues.*"

And therefore, in no high-mindedness, in no boastful or presumptuous spirit, but in deep humility and thankfulness, let us contemplate the mighty mystery, which gives us, for the present, such inestimable opportunities and advantages. Instead of bewildering ourselves with unfathomable speculations *why* the course of God's dealings with mankind has been what it is, why there were Jews, and why there were Gentiles—a chosen family, and a world of aliens; and why the fall of one should be the reconciling of the other, let us keep this consideration before us, that our present privileges are our peril;

that if we rejoice, as rejoice we ought, it must ever be with trembling. If they were cut off who denied the Lord that bought them, what have not those to expect, who crucify Him afresh by godless lives? What cause have we to take heed, lest trifling with His willing mercy, we should, in the end, draw down upon us the infliction and the penalty of His unsparing justice!

## SERMON XI.

### E A R N E S T N E S S.

(FOR SEPTUAGESIMA.)

2 CORINTHIANS ix. part of v. 24.

*“But one receiveth the prize. So run, that ye may obtain.”*

ON the western side of that narrow strip of land which connects what is now called the Morea, with the mainland of Greece, there stood in St. Paul's days, and there still stands, a country town of some note then, but of none now, called Corinth.

A little to the north of it, at about the same short distance as it is from Elford to the Lichfield race-course, there was a place called Isthmus, where once, in every two years, there was a great gathering of the neighbourhood, to see running-matches, boxing-matches, chariot-races, and other sports. These “Isthmian games” (as they were called) were to the people of Greece very much what the Epsom or Ascot races are to many Englishmen now, the great event of the time. Only in *them*, as in so many other things,

the heathens put us, who call ourselves a *Christian nation*, to shame. In England, if there be one place more than another where the devil has everything his own way, it is on a race-course, the very home and head-quarters of gambling and roguery and drunkenness, and debauchery and wickedness of every imaginable and unimaginable kind.

Not so among the heathens. Human nature, indeed, is always the same. Where there are many men, there is sure to be much that is bad ; but these Isthmian games were free from almost all that is our shame and disgrace on similar occasions. Persons, for instance, who had been guilty of offences against the law, were not allowed to compete for the prize. Those who did compete were subjected for ten months to a very severe training. During that training, they had to keep under the body, and bring it into subjection by the most rigid obedience to the trainer's orders. And lastly, the prize, when won, was *what?*—some thousands of pounds? No, indeed, nothing of the kind! Only a wreath of some common leaf which would be withered before the day was over. To win *honour* was enough for a Greek. To win *money* is all that most Englishmen care for.

St. Paul, as we know, spent, at one time, two full years at Corinth. He might well have seen the Isthmian games, so dear to every Corinthian's heart ; he may have gone into the very thick of the crowd, and preached Christ, no man forbidding him. I wonder what would have been his chance at an *English* race !

Well, in that wise, kindly spirit, in which he made himself all things to all men, adapting himself, so far as he could, to their feelings and prepossessions and ways of thought, for the purpose of winning their confidence, and attracting them to listen to him, when he writes to the Christians of Corinth he enforces what he has to say to them on the subject of winning their way to Heaven, by an illustration which was sure to interest them, the foot-race at their own Isthmian games. The life of a Christian, he tells them, should be like the struggle you have seen going on there, and like the preparation for it.

It demands the whole heart and the whole strength of every runner ; the full power of wind and limb. Temperance, soberness, and chastity must keep the body in condition for exertion ; resolution and self-control must give vigour to the whole man, if success is to be insured. The more careful, the more sparing of anything like

indulgence of any kind the training, the more sure the success. And all Christians—not one only, but all—may be like the one winner on the Isthmus of Corinth. As surely as he would get the prize who won it there, so by the mercy of our God in Christ Jesus, shall every one of us win the prize in the Christian race who runs “not as uncertainly,” who fights under Christ’s banner “not as one that beateth the air,” but makes every blow tell on his enemy. Every such runner, every such combatant, shall receive the prize—a prize, not such as at the Isthmian games, a withering garland, but a crown of glory which will keep its bloom for ever in Heaven. This is within reach of every one who is admitted into the fellowship of Christ’s religion, and runs the race that is set before him with faithful diligence. “So run, therefore,” concludes the Apostle, “that ye may obtain.”

Thus simply, and most clearly, we are taught that the whole secret of success is earnestness; but if success in matters of this life is almost invariably the reward of eager painstaking, how much more certain is it where the Lord who died for us is the dispenser of the reward. To insure *worldly* prosperity, there is no labour that men will not cheerfully endure; yet, at most, it is a

possession which can be kept for a few years only—a corruptible crown, which will perish in the using, or which cannot be taken with us when we die. Somehow or other, disappointment and vexation of spirit are sure to make it a load upon the aching brows: it is not worth its cost; and many a score of successful men, winners of the world's great prizes, have, when they have lain down to die, expressed a feeling which, with the substitution of a single word, I may quote as describing their true condition—

“Had I but served my God,  
With half the zeal, that I have served the world,  
He would not in mine age  
Have left me naked to mine enemies.”

Worldly success has no depth of root. Not so in things pertaining unto God. “They do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.” But, as I have already said, there can be no success without earnestness. Earnestness, however, in Christ never fails, never has failed, never can fail; for He Himself has made it the one essential thing; and where He sees that the prize is never withheld, he that runs is certain to obtain.

Strange racing you will say, in which the very weakest and feeblest of all, decrepit men,

sickly women, little children, outstrip those who are in their full vigour ; in which, the halt, the lame, the bedridden, the palsied oftentimes win the race, leaving those far behind who seemingly have all advantages in their favour, but who, through over-confidence, miss them, or, in their presumption, abuse them. Even the old heathen could make a fable to teach how the slowest of reptiles, the tortoise, won the race over the fleetest of beasts we have, because she thought herself secure. So run, therefore, brethren, as to obtain. It is not all running that wins : not irresolute runners ; not careless runners ; not runners who will not lay aside every weight ; not runners who think they have time before them, and need not start yet ; not runners who go a little way and then sit down to rest ; not runners who despond and think they are sure to be beaten ; not runners who doubt that there are rewards enough for all ; and most assuredly not runners who believe that there will be prizes for them, but for none besides. Not for these, or such as these, but to the Saviour's merits and intercession, and through His blessing upon their poor, imperfect, yet hearty efforts, on all others. The prize may be lost, and therefore His Word to every one of us is, " Hold that

which thou hast fast, that no man take thy crown."

It shall not easily be lost, in spite of all our frailties and infirmities, for is not this His blessed word of encouragement, to every one who hears it, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life?"

## SERMON XII.

### SEED-TIME.

(FOR SEXAGESIMA.)

LUKE viii. 11.

*"The seed is the Word of God."*

WE have heard a good deal to-day, on the subject of seed, and sowing, and soils. And wherever we turn, we look on lands on which seed is being sown now, as it has been for years and years past.

There may have been times in which the sowers have altogether neglected their work; there are places in which no seed has ever yet been sown; and soils are very different, and climates very various.

But of one thing there can be no doubt, that the seed sown has been good, for it is the Word of God, and that, in our day, at any rate, it has been so abundantly, and, in the main, so diligently scattered, that there ought to be heavy crops everywhere, growing up for the harvest.

There has been much sowing of good seed

among us, close at home, and in the broad distance, but *with what result?*

Now let us, with a faithful, anxious view to edification, instruction in righteousness, and, if so it should be, for admonition and reproof, suppose the very worst case that could be. It matters not where, nor who has been the sower; but let us suppose such a case as this:—

Good seed has been sown, and we have come to study the growth. We should expect, not a field altogether without weeds, but with some fair prospect of a return for labour. And what do we see? Nothing but what utterly disappoints us. The growth looks of the most unpromising, the most hopeless kind. To drop the parable, let us imagine some unhappy place where all things remain as if no care had been bestowed upon it, as if no prayers had been offered in its behalf. He that was filthy is filthy still; he that was unjust is unjust still; he that was unforgiving is unforgiving still; he that was godless is godless still. The change has been from bad to worse. The profane, the unchaste, the drunkard, the dishonest, the false, the envious, the spiteful, the slanderer, the uncharitable, the busybody, the careless, are just as they were years ago, or rather, through the

very lapse of time and continuance in bad habits, they are more deeply sunk in the depths of sin. Bad parents, still surviving, go on now as of old, teaching their children wickedness by bad words and bad examples. Bad children, themselves becoming parents, are walking in their own parents' steps, and doing their best that forgetfulness of God, and the breach of His commandments may be perpetuated.

Let us suppose that all this time good seed has been sown in much the same way, and to the same extent, as elsewhere. Has the enemy been more busy in sowing tares, or has the ground been more suited to their growth?

What a lamentable state of things we are imagining! What a triumph for those who *can* triumph and find satisfaction in seeing God's work frustrated! And oh! what misery for the sower, as he sees that almost all his labour in the Lord has been in vain! and fears that through his fault, his great and grievous fault, much of the failure has arisen; that he will have to render an account at last, of sloth and self-sparing, of cowardice and faint-heartedness, of unwise words, of faulty example. Want of zeal, want of love, want of prudence, want of foresight, want of faith, want of patience, want of temper and self-

control, want of quickness to seize opportunities, and want of shrewdness to turn them to account; want of insight into the characters of men, want of that gentle, winning spiritual-mindedness whose power of influencing for good is irresistible—for all these shortcomings we will suppose that the sower sees cause, more or less, to reproach himself. And yet, after all defects of feeble, uneven, unskilful sowing, the seed was “good seed;” it could not be otherwise, for “the seed is the Word of God.” Why, then, has the crop failed? What has been wanting? Rain from Heaven to encourage growth?—No. Air and light, the quickening breath of God’s Spirit, the light of His grace, to produce, first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear?—No. The blessed sunshine of His Presence to ripen to a hundredfold of good?—No.

Then where has been the fault? How about the *soil*?—how about the *ground* on which the seed was cast? Let us think what, in this imaginary case, we might find there. No depth of earth? No room for rooting? No careful tending to keep off the fowls of the air? No hoeing out the weeds? No uprooting of those intruding thorns and briars? No real pains to

protect or encourage healthful growth? What if in the field we are picturing to ourselves we should find such defects as these?

O, vile, worthless soil! O, vile, stony hearts! *There*, in our supposed examination, we find the source of all the mischief in the time past; there it is to be found still!

What is to become of a place in such a condition as this? No excellence of seed will help it; no pains of the most skilful of sowers can *force* a change! Is it possible that such places can be found in a Christian land? Or rather—for that is the real practical point—are there hearts in such a condition that, while they remain as they are, they *can* bring no fruit to perfection?

What if there be those whom no warnings will reach, and no chastenings soften? What if there be those who are determined to go on still in their wickedness—guilt ever deepening, habits of sin more and more ingrained into and corrupting the whole character, the sense of right and wrong more blunted, conscience more and more deadened—all things tending more and more to that most terrible of all conditions (because the most hopeless), that which Scripture calls “the evil heart of unbelief”?

I have drawn so terrible a picture, that I myself shrink from the contemplation of it. I try to think that it is exaggerated, that such cases are extreme. And yet, and yet is it so? Have we never seen *parishes*, which at the end of a score of years are very little, perhaps, none the better, for the seed of God's Word which has been sown in them, in which families and households seem to fall back more and more towards perdition? Have we never seen *persons*, so yielding themselves to the power of some besetting sin, that all God would do for them is rejected, that nothing good will grow in that stony soil? Have we need to go far to find such places, to discover such men?

What, if such places should find their resemblance in *our own homes*? what, if such men should be the image of any of *ourselves*?

## SERMON XIII.

### THE WANING OF OPPORTUNITIES.

(FOR QUINQUAGESIMA.)

PSALM lxxviii. part of v. 40.

*" . . . A wind that passeth away, and that cometh not again."*

IT seems to be an unchanging law of God's providence with respect to this mortal life, and this present evil world, that nothing which has passed away shall ever wholly come back. Something like it there will often be, but the same thing never. It is so in the works of creation. When to-day is gone, to-morrow will come, but to-morrow will be different from to-day. When winter is past, we shall have spring, but this spring will not be altogether like last spring, and next winter will not be like this. It is so in the history of nations. They may advance, or decline, but they are never stationary; their present condition is not the same as their past; the future will be different from both. To take

a single instance. Compare (those of you who can), even in the roughest, hastiest manner, the England, let us say, of 1860, with that of 1760, and again with that of 1660, and that of 1560. And who doubts that (if the world lasts so long) the England of 1960 will be unlike them all? A past state of things, however good and desirable in itself, can never be recalled. It has been the same in the fortunes of the Church. One form of good may prevail at one time, and one form at another. Now one form of evil may be destroying souls, now another. But each particular form of good and evil passes away, and returns no more. It is so in the customs and fashions of daily life: they hold their place for a time, and then they die out; and any after-attempt to revive, and put life into them, so that they may take their old place, is like bidding dry bones live. You might as well attempt to refill the old deserted temples of Egypt with worshippers, as to recall the usages that prevailed among ourselves two hundred, ay, or even twenty years ago. It is so in ourselves personally. We can no more recall for present use the tastes, habits, feelings, wishes, thoughts, of our early life, than we can make ourselves young again, or say to the advance of

years, "Thus far shall you come, and no farther."

All is for a time only, and that time past, nothing can again be as it then was. There is but a moment in the world at once, that moment gone is gone for ever, and since time began till time shall be no more, no moment has been precisely like any that went before it, or will follow it, in any place, or to any person.

We all of us *know* these things perfectly well, so well that it has, perhaps, seemed needless that I should speak of them; but I have not spoken without a purpose. Whatever our knowledge may be, we live as if we could recall the past, control the future, and might waste and abuse the present; not perhaps in matters of daily life, of loss and profit, and such like, for there the shrewdness of worldly experience rules us, and, as the proverb runs, "we make hay while the sun shines." But in matters of religion, in things affecting our never-dying souls, it is not so. "A more convenient season" is the promise we bestow on them. Too many of us allow them no share in the present, as if we were sure of the future; and as if opportunities would always come at our call. And yet the Holy Spirit in the psalm from which the text is

taken, compares "flesh," man, that is, and all his days, and works, and opportunities, to "a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again;" and in another psalm, sadly familiar to us all, there is the same testimony with respect to ourselves and all we think we have—"so soon passeth it away, and we are gone."

We have each our allotted time on earth, short or long, as God ordains in His infinite wisdom and love, short at longest, but always sufficient for the accomplishment of the purpose for which we were sent into the world, the working out our own salvation through the help of the Holy Spirit working with us, and through the merits and intercession of our blessed Lord. In that allotted time we have each of us a certain measure of trials and temptations, of mercies and blessings, of helps and encouragements, of checks and chastisements, of calls and opportunities. Not a day passes that we have not a share of some of them; for it is through them that God teaches us what is in our hearts, and so trains them, if we will, for heaven. But it rests with ourselves whether we use them, or neglect them, or abuse them. We may be hardened by trials, or brought nearer by them to God; we may yield to temptations, or resist

them ; we may forsake our own mercies and blessings, or they may win us to love God with an undivided love ; we may set no value on helps and encouragements, or they may lead us from strength to strength ; we may be deaf to calls, or we may listen to them ; we may neglect our opportunities, or we may avail ourselves of them. All this rests simply with ourselves. But there they are, sent by God. God sends them, and then they pass away, and come not again. If we turn them to good account, it is well. But if not, when once gone they are gone for ever. They return no more. God, in His patience and pity, may send others ; but these, once lost, can never be recalled, and *we* can never be again as though we had not had them. They *might* have helped us on our heavenward road, but they are lost and gone ! Gone ? yes ! but for each of them we shall have to give account before the Judgment seat.

O the past ! the past ! What a record it has against us of wasted opportunities, and of chances thrown away ? O what we might have been by now, and are not ! what we might have done, and have left undone ! Think of the calls, and warnings, and mercies, and opportunities which have come to us, and which we have

slighted, wholly or in part, from our youth up until now. What would we not give to have some of them back ? but they have passed away for ever. Think—to mention one point only—what the opportunities which have been afforded you within these four walls, any one year of your lives, of becoming, by the grace of God, better men and nearer heaven ; of knowing Him better, and of being in closer communion with Him. Think of the prayers in which you might have joined, and did not ; of the number of sacraments you might have received, and would not ; of the holy seasons which, duly used, might have brought blessings to your souls, but which, by your own neglect of them, because you were too busy or too idle, have not. They have passed away, and come not again. You can never be now as you might have been if you would have used them well. The most that can now be hoped is, that of the opportunities which God's mercy yet may offer, you will avail yourselves. His mercies are new every morning. Still He calls you lovingly. Are the number of your opportunities, and of His mercies and calls, to be turned into an argument for slighting them ? Because you have forgotten how many you have had and slighted, do you think God forgets them ? Do you think

that the devil forgets them? Because they have been continued so long, do you expect them to continue for ever?

Do I say these things without a cause? Do I say them at an unsuitable time? One more earnest call to deepened repentance is about to sound in our ears. Another Lent is at hand. It will come, and then it will pass away; and then *that* opportunity will be gone for ever.

Now do not misunderstand me, or misrepresent my words, which is an easy way of salving a reproachful conscience. *All* times are good for repentance; day by day, every day, all day, the year through. The more frequently and continually we humble ourselves before God the better, for I suppose the stoutest hearted among us hardly thinks that he has nothing to repent of. But it so chances that just now the Church's penitential season, in preparation for the yearly remembrance of our Lord's death upon the Cross for our sins, is at hand. It is an opportunity: some will not have any other, and many, no doubt, will see future Lents. But this Lent, as all past Lents, is one further opportunity given us by God; a call to sorrow for sin; a call which at least we cannot but hear. I only speak

of it as an *opportunity*; I say nothing more. But as an opportunity it is one of God's sending, and you may use it for the purpose for which it was appointed if you will; and if you so use it, at least it will not hereafter be a witness against you. But, at any rate, remember this! it is an opportunity, and as such "it passeth away, and cometh not again."

## SERMON XIV.

### THE COMING JUDGMENT A CALL TO REPENTANCE.

(FOR ASH-WEDNESDAY.)

Acts xvii. part of v. 30, 31.

“.... God . . . now commandeth all men every-  
where to repent: because *He hath appointed a day, in the*  
*which He will judge the world in righteousness by that*  
*Man whom He hath ordained. . . .”*

VERY solemnly, and very sadly, my brethren,  
have we been warned to-day of “the great  
indignation of God against sinners.” Very  
earnestly have we been called upon to “remem-  
ber the dreadful Judgment hanging over our  
heads, and always ready to fall on us.” And  
very affectionately and lovingly have we been  
exhorted to “return unto our Lord God, with  
all contrition and meekness of heart, bewailing  
and lamenting our sinful life, acknowledging and  
confessing our offences, and seeking to bring  
forth worthy fruits of penance.”

And nothing, surely, can be more impressive

(there can be nothing, most assuredly, which ought to come more thoroughly home to the hearts and consciences of every one of us), than the argument by which these things are urged upon us,—namely, that the time is fast approaching when repentance and acceptance with God will be no longer possible ; when that pleasant dream of self-deceiving, so common as to be all but universal,—those ready excuses with which we so easily and fatally satisfy ourselves, will abruptly terminate with a shock and a dismay, never to be lessened, in a waking as hopeless, as it will be eternal ; when those who have despised, and trifled with the goodness, patience, and long-suffering of God will stand, unprepared to meet it, in the dawning of a day of vengeance, bursting upon them suddenly and overwhelmingly ; when those who have rashly, madly, spoken peace to their deadened consciences, and whispered that all was safe, shall find sudden destruction come upon them as inevitably as pangs upon a travailing woman, and they shall not escape. For we are assured that it will be “too late to knock, when the door is shut ; too late to cry for mercy, when it is the time of justice.”

Thus, then, in Lent as well as Advent, does  
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the Church exhort us to use our day of salvation while the day of salvation lasteth ; to use the *day* ere the night cometh when no man can work ; \*9 use the day of *Salvation*, while it lasteth, because of the Day of *Judgment* which will bring in a state of things that will last for ever.

“The day of Judgment!” how often is the mention of it on our tongues ! how seldom does the thought of it influence, to any great extent, the passing thoughts, the unconsidered words, the trivial actions of our daily life. And if so, since our whole existence is all but made up of them, how little does that, the remembrance of which *should* control us in all things, produce the effect which it ought. I do not mean that it has *no* effect. On the contrary, I believe that conscience has no more powerful ally. I believe that it is a great and continual check upon gross offences ; that sins which, in all probability, would not be detected by the eye of man, are often left uncommitted through fear of the sentence of the Judgment-day. And I believe that this is the case with many who make a mock at sin, and pretend to think it manly to defy God. Before now, men whose lives have been evil enough, have told me of sins from the

commission of which the thought of the coming Judgment has kept them back. And many there are, no doubt, whom the Love of Christ as yet fails to constrain, but whose fears of "that terrible voice of most just Judgment, 'depart ye cursed into the fire everlasting, prepared for the devil and his angels,'" preserve from habits of transgression. And if this be so in the case of those whose hearts are not altogether right with God, much more will it be so with those who are serving Him from love, and not from fear. "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? His eye is upon me, how shall I pain Him? I must answer for all at last; how shall I endure the shame of hearing Satan testifying against me, in the presence of Him, Who died to save me from sin and its penalties?" Something like this will be the dealing of the devout soul with itself under the influences of temptation. But, as I said just now, the thought of our responsibility, while it goes a certain way, does not go all the way with us which it might and ought. Were it to be to us the perpetual, but gentle instrument of restraint over thought, word, and deed, the contemplation of it would lose far more than the half of its terrors. Though we might rejoice with

trembling at the thought of the Lord's coming, we should still rejoice, in the hope that the account might be given with more of joy than of grief.

The dread of the coming Judgment is not the highest motive, nor is it the most powerful to keep men from offending God. There is a hymn to be found in almost every collection (right little, I suspect, do many who use it, know where it comes from), which begins with these words :—

“ My God, I love Thee ; not because  
I hope for heaven thereby.”

Such words, and all the rest of it, in the Latin original, would (I doubt not) be simple truth on the tongue of the great St. Bernard, who, if any one, knew the love of Christ which passeth knowledge : but would it be true, or anything like truth, from you or me? Could we say that the hope of a portion in heaven has no influence on our affection towards God? Is it not, rather, the chief cause of our love? And so with respect to the Judgment-day. God knows whereof we are made, and so never tempts us to speak unreal words. It would be well if our faith and love were so strong as that they should hold in check each thought, word,

and deed of our daily lives ; but, being what we are, He knows that, for the mass of mankind, at least, to be simply impossible. And so He helps us by the infusion of other motives. We ought to do all from love : but as that will hardly be, He influences us by the revelation that for each thought on which we dwell, each word we speak, each action of our lives, for all that we have done or shall leave undone, we shall have to give a true account unto Himself. And that influence is to be so used in regard to past, present, and future, as to lead us on with His Grace, to godliness. "God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent, because He hath appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained." And this day of Judgment is the doctrine which lies at the root of all Scripture. Were there no Judgment, there were no need of holiness, no need of a Saviour, no need of an Intercessor, no need of a Sanctifier. Men might live like devils, and die like the brutes. Therefore, of the certainty of this event the Bible bears its testimony, in every age, and in almost every book. Of this, Enoch, the seventh from Adam prophesied : this Abraham believrd : this Job foresaw : this Moses taught : of this

David sang : on this Solomon reasoned : to this Samuel, and all the prophets after him, referred (with no greater clearness, indeed ; for what could go beyond the words of Solomon, “God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil ?” but) with more minuteness of detail, until the Lord Jesus, the future Judge, Himself made known all that He thought good to be revealed ; opening out the subject more and more, in His Gospel-teaching first, and then in the writings of SS. Paul, Peter, James, and Jude, till, in the last visions of the last book of the Bible, St. John closes the Apocalypse with a description of that day which can only be surpassed by the reality.

Of this most interesting, but most awful subject, I purpose, in reliance on God’s help, and your prayers, to speak during the present Lent. I can enter upon it, at this season, somewhat more fully than is possible in Advent ; and it will, with God’s blessing, be no inapt or unappropriate line of instruction, in preparation for that time when we are to contemplate the Death and Passion of Him, through the merits of Whose Atonement for sin, we can any of us hope to escape condemnation ; and through

Whose Resurrection, we look for life immortal, in an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, when the Judgment is past.

To our special prayers for this penitential season let us add this, that we may keep the remembrance of that Judgment steadily before us, and obtain grace to prepare for it ; so deepen our repentance and amend our lives, as, at the last, we may attain to a portion of eternal joy, through Jesus Christ our Lord ! Amen

## SERMON XV.

### THE CERTAINTY OF A DAY OF JUDGMENT.

(FOR THE FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.)

HEBREWS ix. part of v. 27.

*" . . . It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."*

DEATH and Judgment—First the one, then the other. To these two things we have all to look, as being the only things which are absolutely certain to come upon every one of us.

As for Death, he is always close to us, on every side of us; and here his victims are beneath our feet. Hour by hour, there are many summoned to die, and the youngest and the strongest of us is just as liable to be the next victim as the oldest and the feeblest. At any rate, sooner or later, each of us will be struck down by that unsparing hand. There can be no flight, no escape, no deliverance. His touch is fatal: his coming certain.

And as for Judgment, *that* is so certain, too, that the Apostle speaks as though it would be mere waste of words to argue about it; it is among the very first principles of the faith of a Christian, among the first things which a Christian child is taught. "Not laying again the foundation of repentance . . . and of faith . . . and of resurrection from the dead, and of *eternal judgment*;"—"leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on," continues the Apostle, "unto perfection." He deemed it needless to dwell on the certainty of the fact: his care was to lead the thoughts of those to whom he was writing to the consequences. "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."

Assuredly there is no truth that needs to be so perpetually in our minds as this—that we shall have to answer, after our time of trial on earth is ended, for everything we have said and done during its continuance. But it is so terrible a truth that the temptation is to avoid thinking of it as much as we can, and by self-love and self-deceiving to find excuses for ourselves, which, were the case that of another, we should be con-

vinced would be utterly inadmissible. We are ready enough to say of our neighbours, that this man or that will have much to answer for at last; that, by and by, this hypocrisy will be exposed, that lie detected. But is it our *way* to speak so sternly with respect to our own offences?

Yet surely, my brethren, if we *are* to be judged, and if the result of that judgment is to place us for ever in Heaven or Hell, there can be nothing more needful than that we should have the thought of that judgment before us continually; that we should live in the *fear* of it all the day long. Now, with that conviction on our minds, let us look at what Scripture teaches us. "Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. *For* God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil."

A law is here laid down, and we are warned that they who break it shall be judged for its infringement. But this implies two things: first, that it shall be known who *do* break the law; and secondly, that punishment will follow conviction. In this world it is often otherwise. Many a law is broken, and the offender is never found out. And not rarely does it happen that even where a verdict of guilty is pronounced,

the criminal escapes some very considerable portion of the penalty of his crime. Not so, however, with God. He lays down His law, and says plainly that no offender shall escape His judgment. "We must *all* appear before the Judgment-seat of Christ." Ay, but not every guilty man who is brought to trial here on earth, is convicted; he may be known to be guilty, but the evidence against him fails, the case breaks down for want of witnesses. So it is in this world; but not so, however, is it with God. *He* brings us before the judgment-seat, "that every one may receive the things done in the body whether it be good or bad." Well, then, the things themselves must be the witnesses for, or against us. And to our trial, therefore, they will be cited; and at it they will appear. "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every *secret* thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil." Every *secret* thing! mark that. *Thought* in secret, and never disclosed. *Done* in secret, and never found out. That is our security with our fellow-men; but with God, it is no security at all. He sees all, hears all, knows all. In the darkness as in the light; the innermost recesses of our souls, as well as the outward actions of the body, all is before Him;

from Him nothing is hid. Nothing ! Nothing at any time.

Here then, my brethren, is the thing which, if you will write it in your hearts, will make the future Judgment so present to you, that you will never forget it, yea, will preserve you from the incurring the doom that will be pronounced on those who will *not* fear God, nor keep His commandments. The love of God, love and gratitude to Him Who hath done so great things for us, shown us such mercy and compassion, and given us such helps, ought to be the influencing motive to induce us to keep His commandments with our whole hearts ; but if the love of Him does not constrain us, there is that other motive, fear, to teach us that He is a terrible God, Who will by no means spare the guilty. But neither love nor fear will ever work on us thoroughly, unless we *believe* with our whole hearts, that there is not a thought in our minds, a word on our tongues, nor action of our lives, but God knoweth it altogether. "Thou God seest me," should be the ruling principle, the guiding influence of our lives. Nothing will prepare them but that for the coming Judgment which we must each undergo. Who, if he believed that God's eye was upon him would have the boldness which now

he has, when he feels secure that none of his own kind see him ? Who, that now is not afraid to tell a lie because he thinks he can deceive a parent, or a master, or a friend, would venture to utter a falsehood if he was keeping before him that God, who will allot to all liars their part " in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death," sees, hears, and will remember all ? Who would dare to spend time in learning wickedness, if he had the thought full in his mind that God notes how all our time is spent ? Would many speak as they do, so foully, so spitefully, so profanely, if the recollection was before them that God was listening ? Would any do those things in secret, which they only venture to do because they seem to do them unobserved, if they had at all realized (what all the while they profess to believe) that God is about their path, and about their bed, and spieth out all their ways ; that there is nothing covered which shall not be revealed, and hid that shall not be known ; that God will bring every *secret* thing into judgment, whether it be good or whether it be evil ?

I might have dwelt on many motives by which to urge you to prepare for that judgment which none can escape ; but if you will only teach your

hearts to obey the suggestion I have made to-day, nothing else will be needed. Teach your hearts to believe that there is nothing you can do of which God is not cognizant. Believe that His eye is upon you at all times, ever watching, never sleeping, and I will engage to say that the Judgment-day will not find you unprepared. The more you realize that God sees you at all times the more will you fear Him, but the more, also, will you love Him. It is a thought which is no less powerful to encourage you in good, than to check you in evil. And if it be terrible to think that the Eye of the All holy and All pure is continually upon us, noting all our falls and backslidings, our carelessness and ingratitude, it is inexpressibly cheering to believe that every pious thought, every holy word, every kind and charitable deed, every silent prayer against temptation, each patient endurance of wrong, each evil temper subdued, each angry feeling resisted, worldly affections mortified, lusts of the flesh not indulged, shall be seen too, and though valueless in themselves, shall, as fruits of faith in Christ be accepted, yea, and recompensed, according to each man's due.

The Judge standeth at the door. We cannot escape Him; and if we succeed in forgetting

Him, He will remind us of His presence, when it is no longer the time for mercy. O brethren, let us learn to believe in His presence now; let us teach ourselves to believe that He does indeed see us at all times. It is an awful thought, but not one to drive us to despair, for He Who sees us knoweth whereof we are made; He Who is to judge us, can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

Lord! we believe that Thou shalt come to be our Judge; we therefore pray Thee help Thy servants, whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy most precious blood! "Enter not into judgment with Thy servants, O Lord! for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified."

## SERMON XVI.

### THE JUDGMENT UNIVERSAL.

(FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.)

ROMANS xiv. part of v. 10.

“ . . . . We shall all stand before the judgment-seat  
of Christ.

WEEK by week, year after year, this is the acknowledgment, and this the prayer that issues from our lips: “ We believe that Thou shalt come to be our Judge; we therefore pray Thee help Thy servants, whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy precious blood.” And we never join in the Church’s creeds, but we declare it to be an article of our faith, that the Lord Jesus Christ, Who now “ sitteth at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty,” shall come “ from thence to judge the quick and the dead;” that He “ shall come again with glory, to judge both the quick and the dead;” that “ He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. At whose coming *all men* shall rise again with their bodies, and shall give account for their own works. And they

that have done good shall go into life everlasting ; and they that have done evil into everlasting fire."

Is it possible then, my brethren, that with such words on our lips continually, we have no corresponding thoughts in our hearts ? that habit, I mean, has so accustomed us to these, and many such like words, that they leave no vivid impression on our minds ? that they are uttered with no emotion, and no feeling of awe ? and that with the utterance, the remembrance also, in great measure, passes away ?

Surely it might have been expected that if any man did but believe it *possible* that such events as these lay in the distance before him, he could not speak of them with indifference, that they *must* come home to his heart, that *never* could his imagination,—as he spoke of them,—abstain from some realization of that tremendous scene, when every human being that has been born into the world shall be compelled, however unwillingly to stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, and to know that the all-piercing Eye is reading him through and through ; that the closest secrets of our hearts shall then be laid open ; that sins, at the thought of which we now shudder, when we do but inwardly re-

collect them, shall be exposed before men and angels ; that the books shall be opened, and the quick and dead shall be judged out of those things which are written in the books, according to their works ; and that after this, there will be no change, no repentance, nothing for each one of us but everlasting happiness, or everlasting misery, according as our work shall be !

Now, the point to which I would wish to direct your thoughts to-day is this, that in the words of the text, “ we shall ALL stand before the judgment-seat of Christ,—or, as it is written a few verses later,—“ *Every one of us* shall give account of himself to God.” This is the unvarying language of Scripture on the subject. We there, indeed, read of those who would call on the rocks to fall on them and crush them, so only that they might hide them from the Judge ; but all in vain ; all in vain ! And we are only told of it, I suppose, in order to impress us with the absolute certainty that escape is impossible. But, indeed, it is obvious that if the All-just summons any of our race before Him, needs must that He should summon all. The Prophet Ezekiel, indeed, in more than one passage, speaks of persons,—true and loving penitents,—of whom he declares that their former transgressions shall

not be so much as mentioned to them, and there are those who assume (as I think very unjustifiably) that the sins of such persons shall not be exposed, but slurred over and passed by, so that the assembled world shall hear nothing of them ; an assumption which plainly contradicts a score of passages in God's Word, which directly teach the reverse. But however this might be, no one that I have ever heard of (who believes in Scripture at all) has doubted that the inquiry at the last day will be *universal*; that *all* must stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. There have been those who with nothing but an earthly tribunal in their minds, have spoken as if it were impossible that every thought, word and deed, of the millions of millions who have inhabited this world shall be fully investigated ; unmindful that there is *Eternity* for the investigation ; but to this and such like difficulties there is this ready and complete answer,—If God has power to summon quick and dead before His judgment-seat, most assuredly He will not be tied down to what we call time in carrying out His work. And if, which this implies, His eternal purpose is to do perfect justice, we may be very sure that they who have to submit themselves to it, will be the entire number of those who anywhere, anyhow, at any time,

and to any extent have had the power to exercise a choice between good and evil.

“ We shall all,” then,—(since all are to be judged for all their actions),—“ we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.” Not those only whom the Judge shall pronounce “ cursed,” but all ; not those only who shall be condemned, but those who shall be saved ; all alike shall come into the judgment ; all alike shall stand before the Judge ; all shall give account of all things done in the body, whether they be good or bad. There shall be the Apostles themselves, and though for them, thrones shall be reserved, I know nothing to make us doubt that they will have to face the same tribunal as every one of us ;—that St. Paul, for instance, shall be there, and give account not only of his labours most abundant, as the ambassador of Christ, but also of his life before his conversion : that St. Peter shall be there to hear of his faithful feeding of his Redeemer’s sheep, yet also of those things for which he was to be blamed. And there shall be all the martyrs, confessors, and saints of God, who fought the fight, and kept the faith, to receive for Christ’s sake, their crown of glory ; and yet to find that their weaknesses and infirmities, sins,

negligences, and ignorances, have been no less recorded by perfect justice, than will be yours and mine.

But, to come nearer home, and so, with God's help, to make the thought of that tremendous scene, not a dream, but a reality !

Among the myriads upon myriads of that huge assembly, that mighty multitude of blessed angels of every order, and the whole race of mankind from Adam to the last-born infant, among kings of the earth and all their peoples ; princes and all judges of the world ; young men and maidens, old men and children, the rich and the poor, the learned and the ignorant, the crafty and the simple, the oppressor and the oppressed, behold ourselves ! And consider how we shall be judged.

There is no respect of persons with God. Here, in this world, there is little else. But the hour of judgment will sweep all this away. One law for all ! The genteel, and the dainty, and the exclusive, will find themselves side by side, with the rough, and the poor, and the coarse. Lazarus and Dives will be brought together. Selfishness will have to stand at the bar, with poverty in the witness-box, to testify to the want, and ignorance, and suffering, which

his brother might have removed, and did not. Men speak of death as a leveller, but the judgment will make changes that the wildest revolutionist never dreamt of, *perfect* justice to all !

The rich among us will have to render their account why they were *not* ready to give, nor glad to distribute ; why they spent so much on themselves, and (comparatively speaking) so very little on God ; why they treated what God had lent to them for a little while as though it were their own. And the poor, and aged, and helpless must appear to give account of their poverty, and age, and helplessness ; whether they have borne them patiently, and improved them duly, as opportunities of resignation and submission to the will of God, and of sweet temper and gentle behaviour to those about them. And, again, those whose earthly portion has been sickness and pain must appear, to give account of their pain and sickness, how far they bore them thankfully for their dear Lord's sake, in remembrance of His Cross, so sanctifying their own, and making it the opportunity of winning something like a martyr's crown. Those, too, who are weak and slow of understanding, and those who are incurably

ignorant through want of education, must appear, in order to render in their account as to how they have acted on the little knowledge which they had; whether they kept the plain rules of honesty and truth; whether they have been temperate, chaste, and sober; whether they have kept their tongues from swearing and filthy talking; whether they have been kind and neighbourly, and have done by others what they would wish to have done to themselves; whether they have been regular at their private prayers, in the public worship of God, and in receiving the Holy Sacrament of His Body and Blood.

Those, again, who died in childhood, must also appear, as many as had begun to be at all aware of the difference of right and wrong; and must give an account how far they have resisted, or obeyed the warnings of conscience.

Servants must give an account how far they have profited by opportunities given them in strict and godly households; and, in particular, whether they have not wilfully forfeited the grace which God there provided for them, by indulgence in so-called little sins, such as pilfering in trifles, petty deceits, falsehoods, concealments, and other offences of the same kind—things little thought of, it may be, but just the

tests whether God is really feared or no, whether it is really believed that His eye is always upon us. And masters, in their turn, must give account, (and a fearful account it will be to many of them,) of their carelessness with respect to the souls of their servants, of their suffering God's laws to be broken for the sake of their own convenience ; and, worse still, of the bad examples they have set, and the stumbling-blocks which they have put in the way of those whom Providence entrusted to their care.

But is this all ? If *all* are to be gathered before the judgment-seat, then, besides ourselves, will be those who have warned us of our sins, or whom we have *led* into sin, or who have been our corrupters. What an aggravation to the terrors of that time ! “Thy lust betrayed my unguarded innocence.” “Thy example led me to lying and perjury.” “Through thee I drank myself to death.” Ah ! what words to hear ! A soul alleging itself lost by our means ! And we unable to deny it.

And all this in the presence of Him who *would* have saved them, but is now a Judge, stern, inexorable, unrelenting ! Beneath them Hell opening its mouth to enclose them for ever ! Within, the blackness and darkness of unutterable,

hopeless despair ! without, the world in flames,  
the crash and thunders of universal dissolution !  
On the right hand, those men glorified, whom  
some of us have despised. With such, on the  
left, their companions and the devils ! So will it  
be on the day of the Lord's coming. These are  
the terrors which *all* must witness when He  
appeareth.

Thou knowest, Lord, the secrets of our hearts ;  
of whom may we seek for succour, but of  
Thee, O Lord, Who for our sins art justly dis-  
pleased ?

O Lord God ! most holy ! O Lord ! most  
mighty ! O holy and merciful Saviour ! deliver  
us not into the bitter pains of eternal death !  
**Amen.**

## SERMON XVII.

### THE INQUIRY UNIVERSAL.

(FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.)

ECCLESIASTES xii. 14.

*“God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.”*

IT was the object of my last Sermon to impress upon you, that when the final reckoning between God and His creatures has begun, it will have no end until the whole race of mankind, from the day of Creation unto that same day, shall have been summoned, one by one, before the Judge of quick and dead, arraigned, tried, and sentenced ; that there shall be no respect of persons, no hurried inquiry for this man and a protracted one for that, no miscarriage of justice, no escape, no favour, no partiality ; but an investigation full, searching, and complete ; that *all* shall appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, in order that each may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done.

To-day, from God’s Word, I shall show you

not only that each of us will be judged, but that each of us will be judged for each action of his life; not for his general character, whether, (taken altogether,) he was, on the whole, a worldly, or a pious man, or the like, but for every single act, good or bad, of which his entire life was made up. What he did first, and what he did next, through each hour of every day during the whole time he lived upon earth. Each separate thing done, thought, or said, will be brought up again in due order, exactly as it was done, thought, or said,—weighed, sifted, and judged ; for “God,”—says the text,—“ shall bring *every* work into judgment, with *every* secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.” *Everything*, without exception, from the thought that passed so rapidly as hardly to be noticed, down to the most determined and deliberate action that has left its mark on the whole life. Nothing shall be kept back, nothing will be overlooked ; what has been done before the world in the light of day ; what has been done with such successful secrecy that no one has ever suspected it. Childhood, boyhood, youth, manhood, mid-age, and old age must give in each its account ; every vain imagination, every idle word, every ungodly deed ; what has been omitted, as well as what has been

committed ; what has been repented of, as well as what has not been repented of ; things which to ourselves have seemed neither good nor bad—our common talk, the colourless routine of daily life, as well as all which to ourselves has had a character of its own,—the wrong desire allowed, the ill-natured word spoken, the sinful act committed. All of good or evil, either towards God or man. What has been done for God, or in forgetfulness of Him, or in defiance of Him ; the carelessness and wandering in our prayers, religious opportunities neglected, Sacraments refused, as well as means of grace accepted and closer communion attained.

And so, likewise, all we have been, or done to our neighbour,—the helps and hindrances we have afforded him, the encouragement of our good, the seduction of our bad, example, all shall be brought into judgment.

Think, that no single hour of any one day of waking life goes by, in which there are not scores of occasions in which we have to choose what we shall say, or do next, in which, that is, we have the choice of good or evil, of pleasing or displeasing God ! And as you reflect on this, multiply these hours by days, and the days by the years of your past life, and remember that

each of those thousands of hours must render its separate account to God.

We look inwards, and our very hearts die within us. We see dark blots over all the past ; we think of those secrets of our souls which we ourselves shrink from recalling. And all of these are to be laid bare before God ! They are bad enough in our own eyes, in spite of all our self-love and self-deceivings. And all these are to be exposed before men and angels ! And what will the Judge, the All-holy, and All-pure think of them ? With what judgment will He judge them, who judges according to the truth, and not according to the excusing judgments we pass on ourselves—who have so little real abhorrence of sin, that, in the main, the offence is less to us, than the risk of its being found out. Out, however, it must all come, the deepest secret of the heart ! Falseness and meanness, envy and covetousness, trickery and dishonesty, lust and cruelty, and all the devilish tempers and desires of which the world knows nothing, but of the which, if it did know, it would be unsparing in its judgment. But *then*, not the world, but God will judge us. *Now*, we think little of matters with respect to which the world, for its own sake, is very lenient ; where it passes

no condemnation, we are in no hurry to condemn ourselves ; we have no deep abhorrence for things which it passes over lightly. But there will be a different standard, a less capricious law, at the judgment-day. Christ, the Judge, will judge all things with perfect justice, according to the unchanging ordinances which will not allow evil to be called good, or good evil.

Our thoughts will be judged ; and among them, and our memories (which so continually re-enact our past offences !) it is, that Satan seems to make his chief dwelling-place. That which makes no show outwardly, but inwardly defiles, is what he, the father of lies, loves best. Our thoughts, therefore, he takes, so far as we allow him, under his especial care ; and from thoughts, he works out words ; and from words, actions. And for each of these, we shall each have to be judged !

O ! wretched man that I am, how shall I prepare myself for the judgment ?

There is but one answer to this question. That answer is ready on all our tongues, but God of His infinite grace pity, write it in our hearts. There is One, and one only to Whom we can flee for help or succour ; but He is all-sufficient. He is near at hand to hear our cry and help us, to re-

new, change, and convert us ; to help our infirmities ; and He looks with loving and compassionating eyes on all our poor endeavours, on our struggles, our repentances, and our prayers, miserably imperfect, and defective as they are ; and as yet He pleads for us.

As yet ; but we have not an hour to lose in seeking His further aid, for the Intercessor will soon be the Judge. And then it will be the time for justice not for mercy ! “The Judge without appeal, excuses unavailing, proofs unanswerable, punishment inexorable . . . . the abyss unfathomable, the gulf unpassable, the wailing uncompunctionated, none to stand by, none to plead, none to deliver !”

## SERMON XVIII.

### THE LAST SCENE.

(FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT.)

MATTHEW xxiv. 30, 31.

*“And they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of Heaven with power and great glory. And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect, from one end of Heaven to the other.”*

I AM about to speak again of the Day of Judgment. Hitherto I have spoken of the *persons* to be judged, and of the *things* for which they shall be judged. I must now speak of the Judge Himself, of the circumstances which will attend His coming ; of the pomp and power which will surround His judgment-seat; and of the sentences He will pronounce on those whom He has judged.

And of these things our Heavenly Father has not left us ignorant. So much as is not beyond our understanding He has revealed. What He could do for us, He has done ; and, by the teachings of His Son, and by the writings of His

Apostles and Prophets, He has given us all the fulness of knowledge of which we are capable,—enough to kindle hope and love,—enough to excite our awe and fear.

As in the beginning, it was God who created, so in the end, He will destroy the world which He hath made.

When, at length, that hour, known only to Himself, shall have arrived, the weary strife of good and evil shall be terminated, and the consummation of all things shall begin.

Up to that moment, all things will apparently continue as they have been from the beginning of creation. The sun will rise as fair, as once it did upon the cities of the plain, and earth will be clothed with its accustomed beauty, like the gardens and vineyards on the sides of the sleeping volcano. The world will be going its way as usual; men will be marrying and giving in marriage, buying and selling, planting and building. The eye of faith may have read aright the tokens of the Judge's approach; but to all besides the day of the Lord will come as suddenly, and as unlooked for, as the earthquake or the thunderbolt! In all probability, the faith will have almost died out from the earth, and the notion of a coming judgment

have been scouted for long, as an old wife's tale,—as a mere childish superstition. And then, in such an hour as they think not, the end will come; with no more warning to eyes that will not see, than if it were to burst upon us now! “As a thief in the night!” As the flood to the old world!

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall begin to melt with fervent heat, and the earth, and all the works that are therein, shall share in the universal conflagration. And, as the sign of the Son of man (none can doubt what *that* is!) shall appear in the heavens, and the voice of the Archangel thrill through the world, and that ringing, piercing blast from the trump of God shall be heard from one end of Heaven to the other, and vibrate into the depths of the earth, and penetrate the, as yet, unfathomed abysses of the ocean, the rising of the dead, from their long, long sleep, will begin. The graves around us shall cast out their awakened tenants; the sea shall give up the dead that are therein, and Death and Hell, the dead that are in them. And then shall descend the great white Throne, and He that sits thereon, in all the pomp of Majesty and

power, and state, and glory, even He that liveth and was dead, and is alive for ever more, Who is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, Which is, and Which was, and Which is to come—the Almighty—Jesus, the Son of Mary, Christ, the Son of God. Ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands of angels and blessed spirits are among the clouds around Him, to see and hear the end. And, among them, they who have had, since time began, the custody of those books, in which have been recorded, each thought, and word, and deed, of every human being that had lived and died. Day and night, night and day, those volumes have been swelling in bulk, under their hands, through all the ages of their ceaseless, ubiquitous toil. But now the writers' labours are ended ; they have laid aside their pens for ever. All that remains is, to read the things that are written in those books.

The dry bones have come together ; the dissipated atoms have been gathered back from earth, and air, fire, and water, and re-converted into what once they were when living men ; identical, and knowing themselves to be the same. These live again, and shall live for ever ; and with them, shall stand those who never died, on

whom the judgment-day has come, while they were yet alive. For, "behold," writes the Apostle, "I shew you a mystery. We shall all be changed." Such a change shall come over all, in an instant, as that the saved shall be capable of life everlasting, and the lost, of a life of woe for evermore.

Of the inquiry which will then ensue, I have already spoken. And its result will be, that the sheep shall be set on the Judge's right hand, and the goats on His left. To the one, the welcome shall be, "Come ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the beginning of the world;" to the other, that most terrible dismissal, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." "And these shall go into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal."

To those who have lived in Christ, and died in Christ, there shall be no condemnation. Imperfect as have been their best efforts, weak their faith, uncertain their obedience, scanty their penitence and love, still each temptation resisted, each evil passion controlled, each trial meekly borne, each act of self-denial carried through, shall, for their Redeemer's merits, be

accepted ; while on the other hand, a life spent in forgetfulness of God, in wilful offence against Him, and in defiance of Him, will bring a sentence of exclusion, and separation from Him for ever.

Hear ye, then, the terrors and mercies of the Lord. Many a detail which Scripture has given us has been now omitted ; much of deep importance which might have been said, has been left unsaid. I could only sketch an outline, which you, with your Bibles in your hands, can readily fill up ; and I would earnestly entreat you to do so. But I have said enough, if I have kindled or strengthened in your hearts a living, practical desire, to strive after all those graces which have their fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. I have done enough, if I have helped to realize the fact, that escape there can be none, from the indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, which will be the inevitable portion of those who put from them the conviction that for every thought, word, and deed of their lives they will have to give account in the Day of Judgment. God give you grace to keep that last scene ever before you, every day and all day ; rising up and lying down ; at home and in the fields; in the market and in your chamber; alone, or in the crowd ;—so that the thought of it may

rule your hearts ; direct, control, and guard you, amid the snares of life and the assaults of the devil ; and so lead you on in the ways of love and holy obedience to Him who died for you, as that, justified by His Blood, and sanctified by His Spirit, your sins may be blotted out, and yourselves accepted as faithful servants “in that Day,” before men and angels, and a portion allotted to you among His redeemed for ever !

## SERMON XIX.

### THE LAST LOOK.

(FOR THE FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT.)

ZECHARIAH xii. part of v. 10.

*“ . . . They shall look on Me whom they have pierced . . .”*

WITH the Death and Passion of our Lord and Saviour now once more at hand,—with Gethsemane and Calvary already full in view, it would be unexcusable were I to pass by one subject connected with the judgment-day, of which it is nevertheless very painful to speak and which it is very painful to contemplate.

How far Zechariah, when writing the words which I have taken for my text, was prophesying of the end of all things, or whether he was only speaking of some future penitence of Jerusalem in days approaching to his own, when the house of David should bewail their evil usage of the God of their fathers, is of little consequence, because the beloved disciple St. John, in the opening verses of the Book of the Revelation, applies the passage distinctly and unmistakeably

to the events of the last day. “Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His Own Blood . . . to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. Behold, He cometh with clouds ; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him.”

There can be no doubt, how little soever men think it now, that far beyond the agonizing gnawings of the never-dying worm, far beyond the inexpressible torments of the fire that never will be quenched, will be the misery of being shut out for ever from the presence of God and His Christ ; that the overwhelming horror of lost souls, in the Day of Judgment, will be, that they shall stand face to face before Him, and look on Him Whom by their sins they have pierced ; that He, it may be, will look on *them* more in sorrow than in anger, as He bids them “Depart” from Him, as “workers of iniquity ;” that *that* will be their last look on the face which they have so marred ; and that then they shall look on it no more, for ever !

The subject, therefore, that may well suggest itself to our thoughts to-day (and may God write it deeply on all our *hearts*), is this, that “When the Son of man shall sit upon the throne of His glory, and before Him shall be

gathered all nations," there shall not only be assembled there the scared, distracted, guilty creatures who were His actual revilers and murderers, when in great humility He dwelt among us, the men who spit on Him and buffeted Him, stripped and scourged Him, mocked and derided Him, who nailed Him to the Cross, and exulted in the torments they inflicted; not only hypocritical Pharisees, and blaspheming Scribes, and malignant Priests, and remorseless Rulers, and the railing, bloodthirsty mob; not the wretched Judas only,—and the godless Caiaphas, and the unscrupulous Herod, and the vacillating, worldly-minded, cowardly Pilate,—but all, who in every age and country have walked in the steps of these men; who have been traitors to Him and His Gospel; who have disowned Him, or would not own Him; who have denied Him; who would not have Him to rule over them; and who, by their evil lives and evil examples, have shown that they have counted the blood of the Covenant wherewith they were sanctified an unholy thing; and have, so far as they could, trodden under foot the Son of God, crucifying Him to themselves afresh, and putting Him to an open shame. Once, when our Lord declared that men should

see Him, “sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of Heaven,” His words were reviled as “blasphemy;” for their utterance he was declared guilty of death; and every cruel act of shame and ignominy that could be devised was heaped upon Him. But how will it be when His words are verified, and when they who so abused Him *do* see Him, when in the midst of an assembled world, they hear their own past acts recorded; see the Cross, no longer an instrument of shame, but the “sign of the Son of man” gleaming resplendent in the sky,—behold Him whom they so abused, crowned with thorns, robed in mockery, and then crucified and pierced, seated on His throne of glory, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords? Ay, and now at this very moment,—each in his own place,—what, in remorseful memory of their deeds, are they dreading, foreboding, expecting?

And yet more, how will it be with those—(can there be such among ourselves?)—who, having perfect knowledge of these things, have for years been disowning Him, and doing despite unto Him, dishonouring and disgracing Him, while yet, (which the Jews did not,) calling themselves by His name?

And think not that, in that dread hour, Ho-

will accuse them. Their own consciences would render that needless. Nevertheless an accuser there will be, Satan,—the accuser of the brethren,—the fiend who led them into their crime, and will then invoke their condemnation for it. His slaves they made themselves when they might have been true servants of God. *Now*, they must abide by their choice.

No horror, beyond that! no greater misery! no deeper despair!

And yet who will not fear for himself, as he looks inwards, as he contrasts what he has been, with what he ought to have been, as he sees how far, far more he has lived to Satan than to his Saviour. And so the question asked of old, reverts once more, “Who then can be saved?” And the reply which sufficed then must be our comfort now—“The things which are impossible with men, are possible with God.”

He has found a way of deliverance, even for the worst and guiltiest, who turn from their sins. The blood of Jesus Christ hath power and efficacy to cleanse from *all* sin, those who will accept Him as the Saviour of sinners. But such acceptance must not only be a word spoken, but a life lived; not a profession of service, but a true, honest performance of

it ; not an owning Christ with our lips, and a denying Him to please ourselves. We must be faithful unto death, if we are to receive the crown of life.

Now speaking to Christian men, I need not remind you, that any good you have in you is not your own ; what of safety you have ever had, has come of your having been placed in a state of salvation ; and if you have displaced yourselves, it is through Christ alone that you can ever hope to win your way back.

And far, far away from Him, it is to be feared that all have wandered ; but on that very account it was that He came among us, in order that He might seek and save that which was lost.

The simple question, therefore, for each one of us is this : Will we now be content to turn back and follow Him, or will we be wilful wanderers still ?

Fearful is the thought of judgment, but the consolation is Christ. We have ample ground for anxiety but none for despair ; we must fear, but we must not be fearful. He who made us, knoweth whereof we are made ; He remembereth that we are but dust. He despiseth not the sighing of a contrite heart, nor the desires of such as be penitent. He hears our prayers, He watches

our efforts, notes our shame and sorrow for the past, our carefulness, our anxious pains to please Him now. Poor service, at best! but nothing done by the returning penitent is by Him unnoticed, forgotten, lost!

Surely He desires nothing more than to blot out the handwriting that is against us, and that our sins and iniquities may be remembered no more!

## SERMON XX.

### THE LIFE LAID DOWN.

(FOR PALM SUNDAY.)

JOHN xiii. 38.

*"Wilt thou lay down thy life for My sake?"*

WE have entered to-day upon the most solemn, sad, and yet most consolatory time in all the Church's year; that holy week, wherein she brings before us the events of our adorable Redeemer's Passion; all He said and did therein, and all He suffered for us miserable sinners; till, having made atonement for our transgressions through the blood of His Cross, and having passed through the grave and gate of death, He opened the kingdom of Heaven to all believers.

And surely it is a great blessing, a great privilege, that while in the hurry, and the turmoil, and shifting scenes of life, so much is perpetually drifting out of sight, passing away, and forgotten, the commemoration of this time is year by year renewed, and steadily kept before us; a living,

unfailing, unchanging witness for God, and to ourselves. "Thy word, O Lord ! endureth for ever in Heaven. Thy truth also remaineth from one generation to another." While, amid the strifes and struggles of the world, the startling events of one day are sure to be forgotten the next, generation after generation still holds on to the hope and faith, ever taught at this season, as of old—to the true Word, "worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners;" that there is "redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins;" and that, as by His Cross and Passion He redeemed us, so is His glorious Resurrection the pledge that we do not believe or hope in vain, in looking for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.

All else is changing and passing away; but that remains to give light to them who otherwise would be sitting in darkness, and in the shadow of death; and to guide their feet into the way of peace. Among the sundry and manifold changes of the world, on *this* all faithful hearts have been surely fixed. Hundreds of years ago, that brief confession of the faith,—"Born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead, and buried, rose again the third day

from the dead, and ascended into Heaven," inspired men to venture all upon their truth, even as it does still. And as in that Creed, so to speak, *we* live, and move, and have our being, so will others cling to it, and find in it a hope that shall not be made ashamed, generations hence, when the very stones of the walls around us shall have crumbled into dust.

With this thought before us, that while all else is changing, we have the unchanged record of God's love and mercy to His creatures, preserved to us, let us do our best so to use it, and so to profit by the privileges placed within our reach at this solemn time, as that for us Christ shall not have died in vain, and that for the remaining time of our sojourning here, we may so live to Him, as that at the last we shall come to His eternal joy.

Few as are the words which I have taken for my text, they will at once bring vividly before you one, whose strength and weakness alike give him a foremost place among those who are grouped around our blessed Saviour in the last hours before His crucifixion. The *scene* is "the large upper room furnished,"—the guest-chamber, where the Redeemer was keeping His Passover with the disciples. The *time* is when those few

parting hours of calm and blessed intercourse were drawing to a close ; when Judas had already gone forth to his hideous work of treachery and ultimate self-destruction ; when, perhaps, the Bread and Wine were about to be distributed ; when the final exhortations were to be offered ; the farewell advice given ; the promise of the Holy Ghost vouchsafed ; and the great intercession made ; before the Lord went forth to prayer and agony in Gethsemane, and the stages of the Passion commenced.

It was, I say, under such circumstances, when the traitor, warned and re-warned, had just left the apartment, in order that he might complete his treason, and separate himself from Christ for ever, that Jesus, referring to the events which were now close at hand, said to the Eleven, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him . . . Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek Me ; and as I said unto the Jews : Whither I go ye cannot come ; so now I say to you : A new commandment I give unto you ; that ye love one another ; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another. Simon Peter said unto Him, Lord,

Whither goest Thou ? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now ; but thou shalt follow me afterwards. Peter said unto Him, Lord, why cannot I follow Thee now ? I will lay down my life for Thy sake. Jesus answered him, ‘ Wilt thou lay down thy life for My sake ? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, the cock shall not crow till thou hast denied me thrice.’

“ Little children !” so lovingly, so touchingly, He addresses them. No longer as servants, but as friends, He bids them farewell, and warns them that, in a little while, He would be where as yet they could not come. Doubtless the thought of such a separation would be a bitter pang to them all. Perhaps it was the shock of the announcement, confirming the dark forebodings which must have been fast multiplying within them, that so startled them, that they remained silent,—were unable to find words to express the depth of their sorrow. But St. Peter’s was not one of those natures that brood in silence. His heart grew hot within him ; the fire forthwith kindled ; and *at once* he spake with his tongue, out of the abundance of the heart. As his love had always made him foremost, or among the foremost, in the service of his Lord, so now he

seemed as if he could not endure the thought of being left behind, and not sharing all perils with Him. It was the same spirit working in him, which had already made him walk on the sea to meet Jesus ;—which had already made him shrink from the thought of his Master's predicted sufferings,—“Be it far from Thee, Lord ; this shall not be unto Thee !” and which had led him that very night to exclaim at one moment, “Thou shalt never wash my feet,” and the next, “Lord ! not my feet only, but also my hands, and my head.” That impulsive, eager, ardent temper,—full of zeal, full of love, true, real, honest, hearty, but alas ! full of weakness, that it was which made him so prompt to put his wishes and feelings into words, when others, who perhaps, had no less earnestness of desire, remained (so far as we know), silent ; this it was, at any rate, which made him venture beyond the others in the boldness of profession.

He loved his Master so devotedly, as that we are sure none could, in reality, love Him better ; but St. Peter was trusting in his own strength ; and when he fell, that very earnestness of his outspoken love only made his fall the more conspicuous,—made his errors more to be noticed than those of others. What a comfort it is to us

to think (who would almost, I suppose, be content to *fall* as he did, if we could *love* as he did) that hereafter, as time passes on, he will be much forgiven, through loving much; and that through suffering he was “made perfect in love!” I suppose it was his suspicion that some terrible event lay directly in his Master’s path, some trouble which Judas was preparing, that made him shape the question as it stands, “Lord! Whither goest Thou?” for, as has been often noticed, our Saviour’s reply was rather to his *thoughts* than to his words, “Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow Me now; but thou shalt follow Me afterwards.” A warning of present weakness to put him on his guard; a promise of future strength which should enable him to share even his Lord’s baptism of blood, and the death of the cross. But the impetuous spirit feels no check, has no misgiving; and not suspecting his weakness in the intensity of his love, Peter saith unto Him, “Lord! why cannot I follow Thee now? I will lay down my life for Thy sake!”

Ah! how little he knew what Christ was about to do, and still less what he himself was about to do. Jesus must die for Peter, before Peter can die for Jesus. Now, in his rashness, the servant thinks that he can sooner die than

deny his Lord ! Well will it be for him, if he be enabled to follow at last where Christ has gone before ; happy, thrice happy, if he be permitted to follow Him, not only in His death, but in the manner of it. A blessed privilege does indeed await him ; yet not now, but hereafter. For the present he must be content to learn, in shame and disappointment, what human strength, trusting to itself, could do. Jesus answered him, " Wilt thou lay down thy life for My sake ? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, the cock shall not crow till thou hast denied me thrice."

It is needless that I should follow the history further. You know the rest. " Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall ;" and one and all of us, while we reflect upon the perils of a bragging tongue, while we humble ourselves in the remembrance how often, how shamefully, how deliberately we have denied Christ, if not in word yet in deed ; if not disowned Him, have feared to own Him : let us earnestly pray, that if we fall as Simon Peter fell, our repentance may be as speedy and as lasting.

But now listen to those words again. For a moment consider, what if instead of addressing them to His Apostle, He had put that question

to each of *us*, one by one, “ Wilt thou lay down thy life for My sake?” Wilt *thou*? Wilt *thou*? Wilt *thou*? What would,—I do not say our answer,—but our feelings be? Could we here and now—now and here—be ready to lay down our lives for Christ’s sake? Here and now? Now and here?

But reverse the position of the inquiries. What if *we*, each one of us individually, put the question to *Him*, to the Lord Himself, “ Wilt Thou lay down Thy life for my sake?” what would the answer be? Is it not this? “ Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us.”

“ Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.” “ He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed.”

Let *that* thought be in our hearts, through all the coming time!

## SERMON XXI.

### THE WORK OF LOVE.

(FOR GOOD FRIDAY.)

LUKE xxiii. 48.

*"And all the people that came together to that sight,  
beholding the things that were done, smote their breasts,  
and returned."*

"**S**O God loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." The Father sent His Son into the world that we might live through Him ; and the Son came into the world, that He might die for us. And how the Son loved us, and died for us, unless all that has been read in our ears to-day, and for days past, has been read in vain, we know full well. Not the *measure* of His love, for it is immeasurable, but so much of it as God's Word has revealed and recorded, and as we, by meditation and reflection, can draw out for ourselves. For the experience of holy men

in all ages goes to show this, that though in its fulness the love of Christ “passeth knowledge,” far deeper insight into it is attainable by those who seek to know it, than could be expected on this side the grave. “To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly.” He who learns to love Christ, shall know more and more the greatness of His love; and he who with a loving, penitent, and reflecting heart, studies most reverently and frequently the events of the Passion, will be able to appreciate more and more (because he will understand better) “the unsearchable riches” of that love. Very much of it, indeed, lies upon the very surface of the Gospel history, so that he who runs may read. Even the most careless reader or hearer cannot fail to see it in its broad outlines. But it is in its more minute, in its less conspicuous details, in the careful study of them, that the loving heart is ever accumulating new treasures; in those less seemingly (though only seemingly) remarkable words and actions, which require to be thought over, in order that we may fully penetrate into, and master their purpose and bearing, that the springs of the Saviour’s love to man, to our race, and to each of ourselves,—are revealed.

We think of Him broadly as of One “Who

His Own Self bare our sins in His Own Body on the tree ;” and we acknowledge that nothing could go beyond such love as that act displayed. “ Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”

And yet, as step by step, we follow the incidents recorded by the Evangelists, from our Lord’s last entry into Jerusalem, till, with the declaration that all was “ finished,” He bowed His Head and gave up the ghost, there is not a single circumstance which is not marked by love, in one form or other ; and the more closely we investigate, the deeper and more touching shall we find that love to be.

There is such a height, and depth, and length, and breadth in that love, that, as I have already said, it is unfathomable. None but He who bestowed it can gauge it. We say, “ So God loved the world,” but *how much* that “ So ” involved and contained, no tongue or thought of man can reach. That “ the Word ” should be “ made flesh ;” that “ the Holy One of God ” should be made “ sin for us ;” that God, blessed for ever,” should be “ made a curse ;” that the Lord of Life should submit to death, and shed His Blood to ransom such worthless, thankless, graceless traitors as we are, does not that fact

alone, if it stood alone, express love immeasurable? But it does not stand alone: Love chose to die upon the Cross, that we might live in Heaven, chose the death of the Cross, rather than enjoy that blessedness uninterrupted, and leave mankind in misery. If that were all, could anything exceed it? But it is not all.

Think of the loving words and deeds which are gathered round the Cross! how the love that was universal, co-extensive with the race to be redeemed, was manifested to all individuals of that race who were then brought into contact with the Redeemer! Think, for instance, of the love displayed in those last exhortations to the Apostles, the night before He suffered, when "having loved His own that were in the world, He loved them unto the end!" Think of the lesson of love as He washed His disciples' feet! of the love which gave the traitor Judas every opportunity of drawing back, every conceivable chance of repenting before it was too late, and of avoiding the commission of the crime he was meditating; of the love shown in the words that warned St. Peter, and (after his fall,) in the look that converted him! Think of the love displayed in word and deed, amid all that scene of violence in the garden! of the love which, when

nothing could be said which would not increase the guilt of Caiaphas, and Herod, and Pilate, found a refuge in silence ! Think of the love that bore all those horrible indignities so meekly ; how, when He was reviled, He reviled not again, when He suffered, threatened not ! Think of the love displayed in those timely words to the lamenting woman, “ Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves !” of the love that prayed for His murderer, “ Father forgive them, for they know not what they do !” of the love which assured the penitent robber of a place in Paradise ! of the love that committed the Blessed Virgin to the care of the beloved disciple ! Indeed, when we gather together the proofs of love manifested by the Saviour in the midst of His agonies on the Cross, of the display of a quality so rare, nay, so unrecognised among Jews and Heathens, that it was altogether “*a new commandment*,” it seems difficult not to believe that it was the sight of that love more than of all the prodigies that marked His dying hour, which produced the impression on the spectators, of which the text gives an intimation. Apart from all other considerations, the prodigies *might* have no more related to Him than they did to His fellow-sufferers. But it

was what in His last hours He showed Himself to be, which led even the heathen soldier to connect them with Him, to feel that they were signs from Heaven attesting His mission, and protesting against the usage He was receiving.

In those days, crucifixions were common enough. Why should there be noonday darkness, and an earthquake, and rending rocks, because a Galilæan impostor (as the many had been taught to deem Him) was crucified ? If it was felt that there was a connexion of some sort, between such events and the Man, if such an impression was borne irresistibly into the minds of a heathen soldier, accustomed to cruel sights ; of a crowd, made up of such materials as those of which crowds were usually made, careless, brutal gazers,—and, it may be, into the minds of strongly prejudiced and unrelenting enemies,—it could only be because the conviction had forced itself upon them, that He was neither a malefactor nor a deceiver ; and I know not what could have been the groundwork of that conviction, but the words and deeds of love which emanated from the Cross of Christ our Lord.

If we blend into one, the several Gospel narratives of the effect produced on the bystanders

at the time, when our Lord had cried for the second time, with a loud voice, and "yielded up the ghost," we shall find that it shapes itself into some such form as this:—"Now, when the Centurion, which stood over against Him, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done,—saw that He so cried out and gave up the ghost, they feared greatly, saying, 'Certainly this was a righteous man.' 'Truly, this was the Son of God.' And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things that were done, smote their breasts and returned."

Now, grant that that loud cry which the Saviour uttered was a startling circumstance (as it could not fail to be) to those whose experience had taught them that death by Crucifixion was not brought on by the destruction of any organ directly affecting life, but by the faintness, exhaustion, and collapse produced by protracted agony;—grant that death immediately following a cry which gave token, that there was still the fulness of strength in the sufferer, might possibly have suggested the awful truth that His life and death were at His own disposal, and that death would not approach Him unbidden;—grant that the earthquake and the darkness (for the dead had

not yet risen from their opened, rock-hewn graves, and the tidings of the rended veil could not have reached them,—the Temple lying far away on the other side of the city, to the south-east of Calvary) ;—grant that the prodigies they were witnessing were somehow connecting themselves in their minds with Him Who had just died on the Cross, what was it that created that conviction that drew forth an admission so little to be expected from such men at such a time—“Certainly this was a righteous man!” “Truly, this was the Son of God!” For my own part, I can only find an answer to the question by contemplating the Saviour on His Cross, His majestic dignity, His unparalleled patience, His gentleness and meekness—but above all, His forgiving, loving spirit.

If anything could startle and touch rude, undisciplined natures, it would be something so utterly unlike their own. And I believe it was that which did it. There were no miracles done by Him; He would not come down from the Cross in answer to the mocking taunts of His murderers; His few words hardly broke the silence of all those weary hours; but there was an exhibition of love such as this cruel, fallen world, never hitherto had looked upon, love such

as moved the very heathen to acknowledge His Godhead, and sent a crowd of reviling, iron-hearted Jews back to their homes, smiting their breasts in shame and sorrow.

And that love, so immeasurably great, so awful in its beauty, so utterly undeserved, what effect is the sight of it producing upon *us*? It sent the crowd away as silent as He was, who had just died before them. *And who shall break the silence which now has gathered round the Cross?* “It is finished!”—Can anything be said to you of Christ and His love, of man and his guilt, than which those wounds which we have gazed at, are not an hundredfold more piercing? Those who are not affected by them, *can* they be moved by the feeble word of man?

On Calvary there was no preaching. *There*—there were only mourning hearts and smitten breasts.

My brethren, should it be otherwise *here*?

## SERMON XXII.

### “IN PARADISE.”

(FOR EASTER EVE.)

LUKE xxiii. 43.

“ . . . . *In paradise.*”

TO Paradise, rather than to this world, does Easter Eve seem ever to belong ; so entirely is its calm the lull that *goes before* some mighty change, rather than the rest that ensues when further change is impossible. Everything connected with it, is full of hope, yet, for the present, altogether short of fruition ; expectant of a blessed re-union, yet still waiting for its accomplishment ; near to joy, and yet kept from it for awhile ; sure of the fruits of victory, yet with the grandeur of the triumph still to come. On the Eve of Easter we who are on the earth, wait with patience before the sealed sepulchre, counting the hours till our Lord shall rise again, and looking onward to that day when the graves shall give up their dead, and when them that sleep in Jesus shall God bring with Him. And

in Paradise they wait with patience also, counting the hours till He has accomplished the number of His elect, and finished His kingdom, and till they attain to the perfect consummation and bliss both of body and soul in heaven. They wait, and we wait. *We* wait, looking for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. And *they* wait for us to join them, "God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect."

What Paradise, therefore, is to heaven, Easter Eve will be to Paradise, with them that love the Lord Jesus, and desire to be with Him where He is.

If, my brethren, we have watched by dying-beds, and seen our hopes fade out, and our dear ones pass away ; if we have stood by open graves, and know what sorrow it is to look our last, even at the coffin which holds the remains of what we have loved ; if we have gone back from our house of mourning to the world, and have felt the shock and jar of its cold hard ways, making our desolation doubly desolate, then is each new Easter Eve to us one more pledge and token that the reign of death is drawing to its close—that the grave has found its Master ; one more remembrancer, as sorrows thicken around us,

and the gaps grow wider, that we must not sorrow as those who have no hope. And thus the comfort, which the recurrence of this day renews, is as true and pure, perhaps, as any we can have, till our own hour of release comes, and we flee away to be at rest.

And so too, if the duties of our calling are of a kind to give us little respite from toil and anxiety,—if they bring us our full share of cares and disappointments ; if they make us weary of the ways of the world, of its greediness and selfishness, its false promises, its fickle favours and its hard bargains ; if we long for the struggle to be over, and our foot-hold to be safe on the everlasting shore, then, to us also, way-worn and world-worn, does Easter Eve bring its especial, soothing calm ; it bids us look up, and lift up our heads, for our Redemption draweth nigh—Redemption perfected by One Who travailed and was satisfied, Who finished the work which was given Him to do, and then laid Him down, and slept, and rose up again, the Lord sustaining Him. It bids us look to the rest of Paradise as a foretaste of, and in some sort a preparation for, the rest of Heaven.

Yes, to Paradise, rather than to this world does Easter Eve belong ; for the more we carry

its teachings home to our hearts, the more shall we be lifted above this world, the more closely do we approach the world unseen; we gaze at the veil which separates us from it, till the shadows of good things to come, and the forms of the blessed ones who are already there, seem to pass before us, reflected through its folds.

Let us speak, then, to-night, of Paradise, a subject which ought to be, and I would fain hope is, in harmony with all our thoughts.

The words of the text, as you know, are part of our Blessed Lord's promise to the penitent robber, who, after rebuking his impenitent companion, and contrasting the justice of their punishment with the injustice of the Redeemer's, made that prayer, which showed the greatness of his faith. "He said unto Jesus" (I am quoting the words of St. Luke,) "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily, I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise."

Once, it had been permitted that the Devil should enter the earthly Paradise, and take man from God. But now, by a just reprisal, the Son of God rescues one who seemed the inevitable prey of Satan, from the very jaws of hell. *That was the first reprisal; but from that hour till*

time shall be no more, such reprisals shall never cease. Where there is a living faith in Christ, where there are faith and penitence, and humility, and love, and trustfulness, *there* the Captain of our Salvation shall effect deliverance from the hand of the enemy, and send him empty away.

“ To-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise !” What a promise it was ! and how, as we hear it, do our hearts burn within us, and we think what unutterable bliss it would be, if such words were spoken to ourselves, and how it would reconcile us to all partings, and soothe us under every bereavement, if those we love had the same gracious assurance. But (I am speaking all along of faithful servants of Christ)—but, have not *we*? and have not *they*? Or rather, as we look closer, do we not discover that we have still higher privileges than were granted to the dying thief? that we can look back with certainty to that which to him was only in prospect, the sanctifying of the world unseen by the presence of the Saviour in the home of departed spirits? Doubtless, the lot of the penitent thief was a most blessed one. Even the agonies of the cross might well be borne with a Saviour at his side, giving promises of Paradise. And yet he

had a trial which we are spared. He knew a dying Saviour, but, as yet, he knew not a risen one. He lived through Good Friday, but he saw not Easter Day. And it is the last which gives its value to the first; for the Resurrection was the pledge and proof that the Atonement was accepted. And, till Christ had risen from the grave, I know not that any one but this poor penitent had said more than, "We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel." But the dying thief had said, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom," and he was rewarded with the promise, "Verily, I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise." But, when Jesus had bowed His head, and given up the ghost, and when this poor sufferer found himself left behind, living, lingering, agonizing; first, one minute, and then another, passing away, and still no release, no summons into Paradise,—was there no misgiving? no temptation in that last hour to fall away from Christ? to fear whether He who made the promise would fulfil it?

We do not doubt that He who had begun a good work in His servant's heart, performed it to the end; but from the trial which, to some extent, must have fallen upon *him*, we are

altogether spared. It is not merely that if the Lord is our shepherd we shall lack nothing, and that we are sure that when we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, He will be with us, and His rod and staff will comfort us ; but our trust is fixed on a *risen* Saviour, Who has made the grave and gate of death the passage to a joyful Resurrection, and Whose human soul, while, as on this night, His body was lying in the grave, had its abode in that self-same Paradise where, as we trust, we have many treasures, and whither we hope to go ourselves when our earthly work is done. What *His* presence has sanctified cannot but be good. Where He is gathering together His elect, of every clime, and every age, saints and martyrs, virgin-souls, and those who have never fallen ; contrite penitents, and those whose weary feet, after many a wicked wandering, have rested at the foot of the Cross at last ; hoary heads with a crown of righteousness, and holy, guileless loving children,—where there are such as these, there must needs be a goodly company, a brighter sky, and ever deepening tranquillity and peace ; green pastures beside the waters of comfort, a foretaste of the bliss eternal, inconceivable ; of yet closer communion with God

and the Lamb. What Paradise is we know not yet : but that which Christ has made the resting-place for those that love Him, can be but little short of Heaven. What it is, we know not : but He has been there before us ; His footsteps have left their trace : the light of His countenance has rested upon it. No fear to follow on the path which He has trodden ; to be, where He has been ! “The breaker is come up before them . . . . their king shall pass before them, and the Lord at the head of them.”

“O death, where is thy sting ? O grave, where is thy victory ?” *The body* to the dust from which it sprung, till “they that dwell in dust shall arise and sing,” till “their dew is as the dew of herbs,” and the earth casts out the dead. And *the soul*, meanwhile, to a peaceable habitation, and sure dwellings, and quiet resting-places, till the Easter Eve of time is past, and we dawn on the Easter of Eternity. And then, O blessed, blessed hour, we shall see Him Who died and rose again ; and realize the promise in its fulness—“If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus, shall God bring with Him !”

## SERMON XXIII.

### “WHO SHALL ROLL US AWAY THE STONE?”

(FOR EASTER DAY. I.)

MARK xvi. 3.

*“And they said among themselves, who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?”*

I KNOW that my Redeemer liveth ; that He liveth Who was dead, and that He is alive for evermore ! I know that the Son of God Who loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, is “the first-begotten of the dead,” the Conqueror of death and hell.

I know that *my* Redeemer liveth ; that God, as on this day, raised Him up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be holden of it. Therefore doth my heart rejoice, and my tongue is glad ; moreover also, my flesh shall rest in hope.

“I know that my *Redeemer* liveth ;” and upon this knowledge, as upon a rock, I build my peace of mind here, and rest my hope for here-

after. If Christ had not *died*, then were all dead ; and if Christ be not *risen*, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. *We* are found false witnesses of God : *ye* are yet in your sins : and they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.

But knowing in Whom we have believed, “rooted, and built up in Him, and established in the faith,”—taught by an instinct which is wiser than all the wisdom of this world, and by a life-long experience which nothing can shake, that the truth as it is in Jesus is *the* truth, and that simple trust in Him will support us in all dangers, and carry us through all temptations ; will lighten all our pains, and comfort us in all our sorrows ; will make life tranquil, and death happy ; *sure*, with a certainty that admits of neither doubt nor hesitation ; supported by evidence which has defied the calumnies, while it has courted the inquiries, of the sceptic and the infidel for eighteen hundred years ; and defies and courts them still ; as morally certain of the facts of the Resurrection, as we can be of *any* fact of which our own eyes were not the witnesses ; our blessed privilege, my brethren, is to repose in the quietness and confidence of settled belief, that that same Jesus “Who was

delivered for our offences, was raised again for our justification ;” and that “ if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in us, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken our mortal bodies :” that “ He which raised up the Lord Jesus, shall also raise us up by Jesus.”

It is because we hold to this, that we profess and call ourselves Christians. Belief in the Resurrection of our Blessed Lord is the foundation of our religion, of the Catholic Faith. And the whole train of religious thought now is so ruled by that doctrine, so bound up with it, that it seems next to impossible to throw ourselves back into the state of uncertainty with respect to the future which must have prevailed before men could rest their hopes on a *risen* Saviour, and conclude that because He rose from the dead, they, as members of Him, should rise also. I am not doubting that Abraham and Jacob, Job, and David, and Daniel looked onward to the work of Redemption, and forward to a time in which they who were sleeping in the dust should awake once more. I can say nothing, for I know nothing of the precise extent, or of the exact limits of their knowledge, or with what clearness they saw down the gulf of time, and

anticipated the events of the future : but while their own words show us that they did not look for transitory promises, we cannot doubt that it was reserved for the Gospel to enlighten the mass of mankind, and to point to a Saviour Who, having overcome the sharpness of death, had opened the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers.

We, my brethren, may look at the graves of those we have loved with aching hearts and streaming eyes, but our sorrow, if we believe them to have died in Christ, is not for them, but for our own loss and bereavement. We do not doubt where they now are, nor where they will one day be. We never ask ourselves, "*Who* shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?" We never for a moment dream that the superincumbent weight of soil which now hides them from our eyes shall hide them from us for ever, or shall interpose an impediment on that day when the dry bones shall live once more, and flesh and sinews shall be laid upon them, and breath shall be put into them.

But truths which are so familiar to *us* had still to be learned by those true and loving hearts—the women who, coming to honour the dishonoured corpse of their crucified Master, found an empty grave and a living Saviour. They

sought Him early, and then found, as ever before, and ever since, that He never faileth them that seek Him.

And thus it was. On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, while it was still dark, as it began to dawn, before the sun was risen, Mary Magdalene, and that other Mary (the mother of St. James the Less)—the faithful attendants already at the Cross and Tomb, together with Salome (the mother of St. John), went forth from the city to the sepulchre, bringing with them the sweet spices with which they meant to anoint the Body of the Lord. They knew nothing, as it seems, either of the guard of soldiers, or of the sealed stone. And apparently, till they approached the mouth of the sepulchre, they had not thought of the size and weight of the block which closed its entrance. Then suddenly remembering it, “they said among themselves, *Who* shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away.” And then followed the vision of angels, and the discovery that the Lord was risen indeed, and all those events the history of which we have heard in the services of the day.

But clearly, in spite of the many warnings

our Lord had given, that on the third day He would rise again, the last thing these women expected to find was an empty grave ; and when they reported to the Apostles that they had so found it, "their words seemed to them as idle tales." As little, at that time, would they have comprehended that the stone was *not* removed to let Him *out* Who was the Almighty, Ever-living God, as that it *was* removed in order to let them *in*, in order that their love might be rewarded by their being made the first witnesses of the Resurrection. "Who will roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?" It was the question of weak faith and strong love, of a *faith* which was not in advance of that which prevailed around them, but of a *love* which would have removed mountains rather than not accomplish the work to which it had devoted itself. But that question may help us, my brethren, to realize to ourselves the nature of the deliverance of which the events of this day are the token and pledge. Had we no more light than had fallen on those poor women, and had we been as pious and God-fearing as they, surely we should have had many a doubt and anxiety from which we have been mercifully preserved. We should have known the corruption of our nature, our utter inability

to fulfil the law of God, and His threatenings of vengeance against all sin. Surely, under such circumstances, the expression of our hearts would be, “O, wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? Who shall receive in my behalf the wages of my sin ? Who shall deliver me from the curse of the Law ? Who shall roll away for us the stone from the door of *our* sepulchre ?”

Anxious, agonizing questions indeed, while they remained unanswered ! questions to which the liveliest faith could as yet find no other reply than in the *hope* of a promised redemption, *somewhat* and at *some* time. As yet it was but twilight, the dimness of dawn, but even *that*, a thousandfold better than the darkness of night. Think what it would have been if all men had gone down to their graves with the unutterable horrors of unpardonable sin upon their souls ! But to us, my brethren, there is no dimness. We stand in the fulness of light, and are called to walk as children of light. When, as on this day, our Lord Jesus Christ rose from the grave, He deprived death for ever of that dreadful sting with which he can now wound none, save those only who wilfully remain in their sins, unrepentant, and so unforgiven. “If,” saith St.

Paul, "we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection." The stone *has* been rolled away from the door of the sepulchre, and the Kingdom of Heaven is now opened to all believers. True, *we* must still see that corruption which Christ's sacred body could *not* see; true, the earthly body must return, through death, to the dust from which it was taken, but from that dust shall spring the "celestial body," which shall decay no more for ever!

This is the redemption purchased for us by Christ Jesus our Lord. He rolled away the door of our sepulchre, when He rose triumphant from His own. All power is given Him in heaven and in earth. And His love, which is as great as His power, seeks but to display itself by bringing us from earth to heaven. In His strength then let us work our way through trials, through sorrows, through storms, through perils, till He grants us rest with all who sleep in Him. All power is given Him in heaven and earth. He will not fail us if we seek Him truly. "And this," saith He, "is the will of Him that sent me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose none, but should raise it up again at the last day." And He who said this is faithful and true!

That same is He, who liveth, and was dead, and is alive for evermore ; the “First,” and the “Last,” and the “Living One,” Jesus Christ, “the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever;” the Conqueror of death and hell; the loving Saviour; the prevailing Intercessor; the unwearied Advocate; Eternal, Immortal, All-merciful Almighty, “Which was, and is, and is to come!”

## SERMON XXIV.

### HOMAGE TO THE CONQUEROR.

(FOR EASTER DAY. II.)

REVELATION xix. 3.

*"And again they said, Alleluia."*

LET us break away, for once, from the direct history of the Resurrection of our Blessed Lord, from the various incidents and details, which, happily, are so familiar to us, in order that we may contemplate the *results* of the Redeemer's triumph over death and hell, and behold the Son of Man (the Victor in every conflict), receiving the homage of all the hierarchies of heaven.

We will pass from the accomplished work and its inestimable consequences to *ourselves*, and look at what has been revealed to us of the *Man* Christ Jesus in His recompense of reward at the right hand of the Father, in the loving adoration of those who, erewhile, had desired to look into the wonders of mercy, wrought out by His

Incarnation, but whom, as they had never fallen,  
He had not died to redeem.

It is a subject well suited to the day, for praying, as we do continually, that we may do His will on earth as they do in heaven, much more should our praises and thanksgivings exceed theirs, by how much the grace and favour bestowed on us surpass that which has been conferred on them.

My text is chosen, however, not in order that I may speak of the particular occurrence to which it relates, but as illustrating the nature of the unceasing worship and service of heaven. In the perfect bliss which has its abode there, nothing remains to be asked for or desired. There is no room or need for prayer, where there is no sin, and all wants are satisfied: but on the other hand, what rest can there be from strains of praise and joyous thanksgiving, when every eye shall see the King in His beauty? In that home of the holy and the blessed, "they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come."

And, my brethren, let me say this at once, that if any one chooses to allege that what is told us of heaven, and its incessant work of

adoration, is only figure or allegory, a mere adaptation to our dull and narrow understandings, he is quite welcome to his objection : it is utterly valueless for the purpose for which he uses it. Grant that the descriptions in the Book of the Revelation are not to be taken literally, those very descriptions are an evidence which nothing can shake, for so much at least, as this, that the highest form of earthly worship has that which is not diverse from, but exactly corresponds and harmonizes with the adoration of the Most High, by the blessed spirits who are gathered round His Throne ; that there is analogy and resemblance so great, between the homage of the Church on earth, poor and feeble as at best it is, and that of the saints and angels ; that the lowest worship formed on the heavenly pattern, is so sufficiently like the highest, as that the terms which describe the one are made available by the inspired Apostle to portray the other ; that the costliest objects of earthly splendour are reproduced to enhance the glories of heaven ; and that what we call music is represented there by something which is not dissimilar, though, of necessity, purer, grander, more spiritual, and more uninterrupted than we on earth can imagine. And those, in short,

who have made it part of their employment on earth to unite in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in their hearts to the Lord, thinking it a good thing to sing praises unto their God in His Church here on earth after His Church's time-honoured way, will find a counterpart employment amid the songs and anthems, the myriad voices, and the tuneful harps of the Church in heaven. I can think of no place but hell which refuses such a tribute. I can find none of God's saints who grudged it, from the first page of Scripture to the last. Poor comfort this for those who, in the midst of their own luxuries, would have the House of God kept mean, and poor, and beggarly ; who rail, and cavil, and revolt at, such simple harmony of choral praise as we have offered within these walls to-day !

For now, my brethren, with what manner of homage do angels and blessed spirits give the honour due to the Redeemer ? how do they worship Him with holy worship ? Does not all the adoration described in Scripture as offered up before the Throne of God and the Lamb resolve itself into this, that it is "thanksgiving, and the voice of melody." That one word "Alleluia," "Praise ye the Lord," at once the

invitation and act, is a key to all. And “Alleluia” is the voice of Heaven, “the Hymn of Angels; the song of the companions of the Lamb; the chant of the Church Triumphant; the watchword of the sentinels of Heaven, the war-cry of the armies of God; the exulting shout of His victorious host.” Turn to those wondrous visions which make up the last book in the Bible, and which were unfolded to the gaze of the beloved disciple for the twofold purpose of shadowing out, by mysterious similitudes, the future destinies of the Church of Christ, and of revealing the work and office of the Church’s Lord (our risen and triumphant Saviour,—“the Lamb that was slain,”) for the deliverance and protection of His people, and you will see how closely all is connected with the events of this day. It is He that liveth and was dead, and Who is alive for evermore, that meets us at the commencement of the Apocalypse, as the all in all, the first and the last, the Alpha and Omega; and the book all but concludes with His solemn warning, “Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha, and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.” And in all the intermediate space, wherever the

Lamb appears, there, in honour of Him, we have the grandest and most gorgeous representations of heavenly worship, and the most glorious strains of adoration that ever passed created lips.

One while, the voice of many angels round about the throne is heard upraising the eternal song, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain," and as the sound of ten thousand times ten thousand, and of thousands of thousands rolls through the infinity of space, and dies away, another, and a yet mightier company,—every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, pour forth the thrilling response, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

Another while, the courts of heaven resound with the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb,—"Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty, just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints! Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy Name?"

What nobler anthem than the strain which proclaims the fall of Satan, the deceiver of the world? "Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of

His Christ : for the accuser of our brethren is cast down . . . and they overcame him by the Blood of the Lamb . . . and they loved not their lives unto the death ; therefore, rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them !”

And what can be more sublime than the record of the triumph over guilty Babylon, the great voice of much people in heaven, and their jubilant, exulting chorus, “ Alleluia : Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power unto the Lord our God. . . . And again they said, Alleluia.”

Or, would you look more closely into the details of the ritual of heaven ? These are the harps of God, and the golden vials full of odours, and the golden censer, and the “ much incense,” and the golden altar. Or, would you know the likeness whereunto the sound of the homage outpoured before the Lamb may be compared ? The songs of the multitude that no man can number, with the accompaniment of harpers harping with their harps, was “ as the voice of many waters,” and as the voice of mighty thunderings. Once, even here on earth (so runs the legend), the shout of Alleluia by an armed host, seemed to their enemies like the roar of thunder. What, then, must be the Alleluias of heaven, in honour of

Him Who died and rose again? And who that is not stupefied with narrow-mindedness, or prejudice, or bigotry, would allow himself to suppose that what is good in heaven must needs be bad on earth? Would such things be in heaven at all, if they were unworthy of Him Who is a Spirit, and Who claims to be worshipped in spirit and in truth? Would they be recorded in the Word of God, if they were meant to teach us no lesson, present no pattern for our imitation, and were only calculated as a snare, to entrap us into superstition, or folly, or sin? Our services on earth are scant enough, and poor enough, and meagre enough, God knoweth. Perhaps a less grudging spirit might, after all, be something nearer to the mind of heaven.

At any rate, if God's Word be true, there is no stinted homage there. The adoration of the Redeemer by the redeemed is as lasting as eternity, as loving as redemption can make it. The sweet songs of praise never die; the sweet incense of Alleluia ascends and will ascend for evermore. So the ritual of heaven in honour of our risen, ascended, glorified Lord, very God and very man, goes on through all that we call time; and so will it still be, no doubt, when He shall have delivered up His present mediatorial kingdom, com-

menced as on this day, in right of His accepted atonement, to God, even the Father, "that God may be all in all." So it will be when time shall be no more. They will rest neither day nor night in the strain of praise to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier, Who provided for man's salvation before the worlds began, "Alleluia ! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." "And again they say Alleluia." Again, and again, and again, for ever !

And even here, in this dim and dreary world, beset with snares, half-drowned in tears, shall the same strain be raised unceasingly ? It is as much the property of the Church militant here on earth, as of the Church triumphant. Only our voices are low, and choked, and hoarse, and tuneless, while above, in that purer air, the sound rings out clear and joyous, mighty as many waters, awful as the thunder.

And it can only be for a little while at longest, that any individual voice is heard here, in the work of praise and thanksgiving. Soon we pass away, soon we are silent in our graves, and others fill up our vacant places in the congregation ; but what matters it, if only we sleep in Jesus ? Year by year, till all shall pass away, faint and feeble, rough and inharmonious it may

be, but still the same blessed strain shall be heard. Still in these earthly tabernacles built with hands, the Christmas hymn shall repeat the tidings of great joy to all people, the birth of a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord ; and the Easter Anthem shall again proclaim that Christ is risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept : that, as in Adam, all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. Still our Alleluias shall be borne from earth to Heaven. And again and again in the future, as in the present, and the past, shall Alleluia cheer the pilgrim on his way, and embolden the Christian warrior to fight a good fight—to keep the faith.

O come the day, when He Who rose from the grave to live for evermore, shall give to each one here present, and to each loved one we have lost a share in His blessed Resurrection ; when we shall see Him as He is, and worthily glorify His Holy Name, the Lamb that was slain, the Lord that is alive for evermore, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come ; and when we, with all those who have departed this life in His faith and fear, shall have our perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, in His eternal and everlasting glory, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen !

## SERMON XXV.

### GALILEE.

(FOR EASTERTIDE.)

MATTHEW xxviii. part of v. 10.

“ . . . . *There shall they see Me.*”

**I**T is very probable that there was some far deeper reason than we can now discover, why *Galilee* should have been marked out to have, as it had, a special connexion with the events of this season.

The first thought which suggests itself is, that Jerusalem, “the hill of Zion ;” which was once, as the Psalmist declares, “the joy of the whole earth,” and which the Lord Himself had “loved, more than all the dwellings of Jacob,” had rejected and crucified the Son of God, and, in consequence of her apostacy, was no longer “the chosen home of God on earth ;” she was cast off, and her house was to be left unto her, desolate. And in token thereof, the risen Saviour was about to lead away His Apostles from the once Holy City, to the borders of the

Gentiles, to whom the offer of salvation, through Him, was now to be made.

But, when we search the Scriptures on this point, we find that out of eight occasions enumerated, on which our Lord showed himself after His resurrection, only *two* occurred in Galilee.

The reason for the command given by our Lord to His Apostles that they should meet Him in that region is not apparent ; these facts, however, are noteworthy ; that when Isaiah, some seven hundred years before, was prophesying of Gospel-times, he foretold that "dimness" should not rest for ever upon "Galilee of the Gentiles ;" that "the people that walked in darkness should see a great light," and that upon those who were then dwelling in the valley of the shadow of death, upon them the light should shine. In that region (so despised by the mass of the Jews, that the question was asked with a sneer, "shall Christ come out of Galilee ?") the Saviour passed His youth, and grew up to manhood. There, He entered on His ministry. There, by the shores of its sea, He gathered His Apostles. There, He continually preached the Word. There He wrought His mightiest works. There, whenever it was that He had an abode which He could call His own,

He lived ; and thitherward, when about to die, He turned His thoughts. On His way to Gethsemane, He declared to His Apostles, " after I am risen again I will go before you into Galilee." Women from Galilee saw Him laid in the sepulchre. And when, at early dawn of Easter-day, Mary Magdalene and her companions were apprized by the angel of the fact of the Resurrection, his word was, " go quickly, and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead ; and behold, He goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see Him." " And," continues St. Matthew, " as they went to tell His disciples, behold Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held Him by the feet, and worshipped Him. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid ; go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see Me."

Evidently, therefore, there was some suitableness,(though to us mysterious,) why Galilee should be marked as the spot whence should commence the establishment of Christ's spiritual kingdom, even as it had been the scene of His earthly abode, and ministry. And so we read, in the Acts of the Apostles, that, "the word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ He is the Lord of all), that word . . . . was

published throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee."

Now why was this? And why were the Apostles to meet their risen Lord in Galilee? Was it for the same cause that in Jerusalem He appeared only to the faithful few, and that, for the most part, when the doors were closed, at night? Or was it, for the totally opposite reason (suggested by Bishop Horsley) that by fixing a set time, and the place where He was most known, He took the best course to set the fact of His Resurrection beyond dispute? Or, was it because He could best unfold the mysteries of His Kingdom, and give His last instructions to His followers before He ascended to the Father, in a place of safety, in the quiet of the fields, or upon the sea, of Galilee?

We cannot speak positively. But this I mark; and this is the lesson which I desire that you should lay to heart, that, not at once, not until some trial of faith and patient waiting had been gone through, was that privilege bestowed, of closest communion between the Master and His servants of which Galilee was to be the scene. Eight days elapsed before He showed Himself to them at the Lake of Tiberias, and meanwhile He had spoken the memorable words, "Thomas,

because thou hast seen Me thou hast believed : blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed."

That was a call, my brethren, to patience as well as to faith ; and addressing myself to those of whom I am bound to hope that their faith is fixed on One Whom having not seen they love ; and in Whom though now they see Him not, yet believing, they rejoice, I desire them to consider how large an amount of patience it was that the Apostles were called upon to exercise. Theirs was no common waiting. Every hour of those days before the re-union in Galilee must have been like years. How must their hearts have burned within them, when satisfied that their Lord was risen indeed, to see Him and be with Him continually !

But, in proportion, brethren, to our faith in Christ, and love to Him, shall we have need of patience too ! To be with Him where He is, must not this be the longing of all who have made Him their portion ?

To depart, whether from Jerusalem that dis-owned Him, or from this present evil world that will not have Him to rule over it, to depart, I say, and be with Christ, is surely far better. But Apostles were constrained to wait, and so

must we. They must go to Galilee, "and there," said the promise, "ye shall see Him." *We* must work our way to a better country, that is an heavenly, and thither, says the promise, "I go to prepare a place for you . . . . that where I am, ye may be also." Surely, what the thought of *Galilee* was to the Apostles, is that of *Heaven* to them that love the Lord Jesus now, the looked-for place of meeting, where the tears of past sorrows shall be dried, hope turned into fruition, love and knowledge perfected, and communion made complete, "complete in Him." "There shall they see Me." "That," it has been well said, "will be *true seeing* where the pure in heart shall see God. That will be the *true Galilee*, where we shall be like Him, and see Him as He is." Scattered, like sheep which had fled from their shepherd, were the Apostles, till the Mountain in Galilee was pointed out as the place where they with each other, and all with their Lord, were to meet once more. And so Heaven is that better Galilee where they who are now dispersed and parted may meet again.

It was but forty days, however, at longest, before the Apostles were once more parted from their Lord ; but in Heaven there will be no more partings. In the Galilee of a better world,—in

that land, which in one sense is, so very far off, and in another, so very near, we shall “see the King in His beauty.” “There shall ye see Me.” In My glory, to your joy, in light and security, and peace, in the presence of all good, in the absence of all evil for ever !

Good, indeed, it were for us to be there ! far better than *here*, in this cheating, disappointing, wearying world ! Yes ! like the Apostles of old, expectant of a meeting with their Lord, we have need of patience ! Yet, at longest, it can but be for a little while. Surely and swiftly life is passing away. For a brief space only, shall we be called on to endure, and hold on in faith and patience. Growing infirmities tell us *that* ! Grey hairs and wrinkles tell us *that* ! One way or other we have the witness within ourselves, or it is plain enough to be seen without ! How multiplied are the partings ! how many are the mourners ! how rapidly the churchyard fills ! In a little, little while, there will be no more need of faith or patience. Whither He Who died for us and rose again, is gone before, thither let us resolutely, faithfully, follow, and assuredly we shall find Him ; we “shall see His face, and His Name shall be in our foreheads.”

## SERMON XXVI.

“WE HAVE SEEN THE LORD.”

(FOR EASTERTIDE.)

JOHN xx. 25.

“*We have seen the Lord.*”

THE certainty of the Resurrection being the all-important fact to be established, as the formation on which the religion of the Gospel was to be built, it was necessary that proofs and evidences of the fullest and most satisfying kind should be given to those on whom the office of “preaching Christ” was to be devolved. It was indispensable that they should all be in the condition of eye-witnesses, so as to be able to speak with the same positive authority as St. John, “That Which we have seen with our eyes, Which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of life, . . . that we have seen, declare we unto you.” And accordingly, to the witnesses chosen afore of God, there was no stint of our Lord’s manifestations of Himself after He had risen from the dead.

Five sundry times—at any rate—He appeared on the day of His Resurrection; to Mary Magdalene; to the women coming from the sepulchre; to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus; to St. Peter; to the Eleven, and them that were with them. "The two first" appearances, as Bishop Andrewes notes them, "to women; the three last to men; and to both sexes. To St. Peter, and St. Mary Magdalene, and so to *sinners* of both sexes. To the Eleven, as the clergy; to them that were with them, as the laity. Abroad at Emmaus; at home in the Holy City; betimes in the morning, and now in the evening; when they were scattered, and when they were gathered together." And all this was done in order that, under every variety of circumstance, they who had known Him best in life, who had seen Him die, had seen Him dead and buried, should be made absolutely certain,—by many infallible proofs,—beyond all possibility of doubt or misgiving, that that same Jesus who was crucified, had left the grave, and was once more a *living man* among them. And further, it was done, in order that each of those who in varying measure, and amid much infirmity, had continued steadfast in their love; who, amid weakness, and cowardice,

and self-confidence, had fallen so sadly ; but who, through all, and in spite of all, had thought of Him as He was, had recognised Him as more than man, yea, as “the Christ, the Saviour of the world,” should have their hearts reassured, their faith fixed for ever, their love and thankfulness made so intense that, henceforth, nothing should have power to separate them from their Saviour, and their God.

It was, therefore, in the fulness of awe—if you will—but of the fulness of faith, of exulting triumph, of joy and love unalterable, that the disciples declared,—“We have seen the Lord.”

But may not *we* too say, my brethren, that we have seen the Lord ? say it,—if not with such a thrill of wild excitement as glowed in the breasts of men, whose very senses must have been reeling with a sight which almost seemed to suggest that they could trust their senses no longer ?—say it, if not with feelings overwhelmed like theirs, since all that was so new and unlooked for to *them*, has, all our lives long, been matter of calm and settled conviction to *us* ?—say it, if not with affections so deeply moved as theirs, yet still with lively faith, adoring thankfulness, and gladness of heart, as remembering all that is implied in the fact, that He Who died to put

away sin, rose again to endow us with righteousness, to open the kingdom of Heaven to all believers?

Surely "*we have seen the Lord.*" Not with our outward eyes,—the eyes of the body,—but with the eyes of our minds *enlightened*, as faith has given us sight! Not with our outward eyes, yet as being certain, that if the scales were removed, it would fare with us as with him of old, in Dothan, who was gazing one moment at a bare mountain-side, and the next at the chariots and horses of fire that thronged it. Not with our outward eyes have we seen the Lord to-day; and yet we know that He has been among us, ay, is with us now; for it is His own promise, that where two or three are gathered together in His Name, there is He in the midst of them. Not with our outward eyes did we see our Lord this morning, yet by many of us His Body and His Blood were received into our souls, as Spiritual Nourishment. We see Him not, as we see each other, and yet the promise on which a Christian's faith is resting, more than on any other, will be this: "Lo! I am with you *alway*, even unto the end of the world." We see Him not, and yet there is His own assurance for those who are loving and pitiful to the stranger, the

prisoner, the naked, the sick, the destitute, “Inasmuch as ye do it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye do it unto Me.” We see Him not. And yet, when we look upon an open grave, and hear His words of blessed consolation : “I am the Resurrection and the Life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die,”—do not our eyes,—ay, even through the dimness of blinding tears, pierce the mists of this world, till one vision fills our minds, that of Him Who liveth, and was dead ; and is alive for evermore, and has the keys of Hell and Death ? I know not how any can confess the faith of Christ crucified, and own Him, by striving to serve Him, and be unable to say in some sense,—“We have seen the Lord,” seen Him in His mercy, His truth, His love, His faithfulness. I know not how any can worship Him in His church, following Him through all He did and suffered for us, from Bethlehem to Mount Olivet, and not say, “ We have seen the Lord.” I know not how any of us can have had the shadow of His Cross laid on us, or borne it daily for His dear sake, or stood beside the dying beds of those we love, or been brought to the edge of the dark valley ourselves, and not say, “ We have

seen the Lord." But, at any rate, the coldest and least impressible of us,—those of you who are least able to go with me in what I now say,—must remember this, that St. Paul speaks of *all believers* as being in actual possession of things which, in another sense, might be spoken of as though they were in the far distance. Thus, to the Ephesians, he says—that "God, Who is rich in mercy, for His great mercy wherewith He loved us . . . . hath quickened us together with Christ, . . . . and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places." And to the Hebrews, he speaks of us as already "*come* to Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in Heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant."

Would that it were so in very deed! O! come the day when it shall be! But in the full sense, as yet it is not. We only *possess* in part. We only *know* in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now we

know in part, but then shall we know even as we are known.

Wonderful is the love of God that so much should be given us to help us on, to encourage us, to strengthen our faith, to make us feel how thin is the veil that parts us from the world unseen, to enable us, even while here, to "see the Lord." After all, however, it is in figure, not in fact; in hope, not in fruition; in faith, not in actual sight, as it was with the happy band who, on the first Easter night, declared,—"We have seen the Lord." There is this difference between us. That sight which was vouchsafed to them, was vouchsafed in order to nerve them for the work imposed on them, for labours unparalleled, for the loss of all things, for the death of martyrdom. But when it is granted to *us* to "see the Lord," all strife, and struggle, and risk, will be over; we shall not only see Him, but be *safe* with Him for ever! It is, however, an unspeakable blessing, that we who are unworthy so much as to lift up our eyes to Heaven, should, in *any* sense, be able to say that we have "seen the Lord."

Vast is the privilege; but vast is the responsibility incurred thereby! Be we, therefore, unceasing in our care and prayer, that that which,

as yet, is only granted us in part, may be vouch-safed us in all its fulness.

For nothing else can satisfy the loving, faithful heart that realizes what the love of Christ has accomplished for it, short of the visions of its Lord, the fruition of His glorious Godhead. Apart from Him the bliss of Heaven would be utterly incomplete. Weary of this world, we may well long for the better country,—the heavenly—so calm and tranquil, so free from care and turmoil, from anxiety and trouble, from pain and sickness, and death; to think of it as secure from all that harasses the servants of God now—as safe from snares, and fears, and sin! It is well to meditate upon its joy, its peace, its love; well to train ourselves for its work of praise and never-ending adoration; well to desire communion with the blessed angels and the spirits of just men made perfect. And what so natural as to be yearning for re-union with the loved ones who have gone on before, who have been our dear familiar friends, who have lived to be the pride of our homes, or who have been early taken in their innocence and purity? But that which we must make the all-in-all of the life to come, is this; that *there* we shall "see the Lord," yea, shall be with Jesus, with Him who loved us, and

died for us, and washed us from our sins in His Own Blood,—and Who,—by His grace, brought us safely through all our trials, in order that we may behold Him face to face, and abide in Him, and with Him, for ever!

## SERMON XXVII.

### OUR PORTION, AND OUR CONSOLATION.

(FOR EASTERTIDE.)

JOHN xvi. 33.

*“These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation : but be of good cheer ; I have overcome the world.”*

THE time draws on apace when the Son of Man is about to take His far journey. And it is well that—before He is parted from us—we should contemplate the provision which He made for His absence ; how He “gave authority to His servants, and to every man his work,” and commanded them all to “watch.”

When any of us are leaving home for any lengthened period, there is a double work to be done. As regards ourselves, there are the requirements for our travels to be provided ; as regards our family, care must be taken that they shall want for nothing in our absence.

It has often been remarked, that this double kind of preparation was made by our Blessed Lord before He quitted this world of ours, to re-

turn to the Bosom of His Father, and our Father, of His God and our God. And the observation is most true ; only this must be borne in mind, that for Himself He did not, and could not, require anything. In His human form, indeed, He ascended up on high, but He was very God ; and as being God, He needed nothing. And yet, there was that which He returned to Heaven to prepare, and which it pertained to His office towards us that He should make ready. “In my Father’s house are many mansions. I go,” said He to His disciples, “to prepare a place for you. And, if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.” He has left us for awhile, till His work of preparation is finished. The same love which brought Him here to suffer and to die for us, still occupies Him where He is. There He pleads and intercedes, on our behalf, before His Father’s Throne ; there He raises that heavenly city of pure gold, with its jewelled foundations, and gates of pearl—the destined home of His redeemed.

Meanwhile, He has given to each one of us our work in His absence. *We* are to prepare too ; to prepare *ourselves* (with that help by which

alone it can be done), for the place made ready for us ; "the place prepared,"—as has been often said—"for a prepared people ; a prepared people for a prepared place."

What the preparation *for* us is we know not fully *now*: but we shall know hereafter. As yet, eye hath not seen it, nor can heart conceive of its blessedness. All we are sure of is, that it will be as far beyond all which at present we can desire, as assuredly it will be beyond all that we deserve. What the preparation *in* us must be, we do know. We know that if we would be with Christ, we must be made like Him; we know that if we would be happy where He is, we must have no will but His; we know that we must be the very reverse of what we are by nature; that we must become obedient, and humble, and devout, and loving, and true, and pure, and trustful, and all those things which will make us most unlike in spirit to this present evil world. Passions, tastes, tempers, desires, must all be brought under control; we must be renewed in the spirit of our minds; our hearts and dispositions must be changed, turned, converted, from sin to godliness. To effect this, is the discipline of life; the work given us to do here; the one thing needful. It is thus we are

to prepare to meet our God—to become a prepared people for a prepared place. And it was in order that such a thing might be possible, that the Holy Ghost the Comforter, was sent down from Heaven, to make His abode in human hearts, and make them ready here, for an abode among the many mansions, hereafter.

And now notice, I pray you, the process by which this work is to be effected. First, the portion and inheritance of the people of God, in this life is to be "*tribulation*;" but to support them under it, they are to have "*the Comforter*."

A daily cross is the indispensable possession of a servant of Christ. Chastening is the note and mark of God's love and favour. Everything that is most distasteful to the natural man, must be accepted as good and wholesome. More trials are to fall on God's elect than on other men, on them troubles are to fall more frequently, and more sharply.

And what is to make up for this? The promise of the Comforter. And never has that aid been found insufficient. No doubt, our Lord's exhortation to His disciples, as recorded in the text, to "be of good cheer," must have seemed to them well-nigh impossible. There

was everything, humanly speaking, to depress and harass them. The world was very speedily all in arms against them ; they had to suffer the loss of all things for Christ's sake. Could anything compensate for this ? It was a bold venture of faith, but they made the trial they endured as seeing Him Who is invisible ; and they were not disappointed of their hope ; they attained the peace in Christ which had been promised them ; and they found it all-sufficient, not merely for a life of tribulation, but it enabled them, in innumerable instances, to face with calmness, and not seldom with exultation, a martyr's death. Surely, the more clearly we realize their position, and put ourselves in their place, the more must we feel that not one in a thousand of *us* would have accepted the promise, or so made the effort to become a prepared people, for habitation in the prepared mansions.

Yet there is no other way than the way of the Cross, the way of tribulation. We *must* be content to walk thereon, *must* trust Christ's promise simply, if we would be received by Him at last.

But, after all, *our* helps and advantages, surpass theirs a thousandfold. In this respect we do not see through a glass darkly. We can use the Psalmist's words,—*fully* understanding them, and

fully believing them—"I know, O Lord ! that Thy judgments are right, and that Thou of *very faithfulness* hast caused me to be troubled." We are sure that every tribulation has an office of love ; that pain, or shame, or sorrow, or ridicule, or ill-report must be good ; if they drive us from the world to Christ, if they help us to hate sin, and walk in holiness ; we are sure that He Who is the Comforter in tribulation is all-sufficient ; we are sure that how terribly soever the floods lift up their waves without, nothing will move us, if we have Christ's legacy of peace within. For our discipline, for our training unto life eternal, His wise Providence gives us a portion of tribulation, and causes that thorns should grow everywhere, and upon all things, here below. But, through the tender mercy of our God, through the love of Him Who died for us, and Who is "our Peace :" Peace grows everywhere too, for the benefit of those who are grafted into Him. And the greater our tribulations, the deeper and the more undisturbed may be our peace. The more of it will He bestow on us, the more we live to Him, being dead to the world, dead to self, dead to all things beside Him.

O ! brethren, let us not allow the love of the

world to drive out love of Him. True, He has bequeathed us tribulation ; and it is often hard to bear ; but it is only to last "for a moment." And he has also bequeathed us peace. O ! let us not forego Peace ! *His* Peace ! through fear of trouble in the world. "The trouble is but in the world, while the Peace is *in* Him, and with Him, Who outweighs the treasures of ten thousand worlds, and outlasts all ages !

## SERMON XXVIII.

### THE FINISHED WORK.

(FOR ASCENSION DAY.)

JOHN xvii. 4.

*"I have glorified Thee on the earth : I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do."*

I AM not unmindful of St. Paul's testimony concerning himself, when I say that there was but One, born of woman, who could use such language as I have just quoted, in addressing himself to Almighty God. There has never been but One of the whole race of mankind, who could ever look on the travail of his soul and be satisfied. Many, we trust, there have been, and among the chiefest of them St. Paul, who, when the time of their departure has been at hand, could, in sincerity and truth, and with no self-deceiving, allege that they have glorified God on earth, and finished the work which He gave them to do; but, for each and all, this clause must be added—"human infirmity being allowed for." There was but One who needed no such

allowance, for,—although sharing man's infirmities,—He always rose above them; and His work, in consequence, was perfect.

All we the rest have come short of perfection, however carefully we may have endeavoured with heart and soul to obey the injunction, “Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven, is perfect.”

St. Paul, when little lay before him in this world beyond the short, sharp pang of a martyr's death, had the testimony of God the Holy Ghost that his “doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions,” had not been in vain in the Lord. “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord,—the righteous Judge, —shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto them that love His appearing.”—Most blessed assurance! And may the like be granted to us all! But, he who so wrote to Timothy, wrote no less explicitly, that he was “less than the least of all Saints,”—“not meet to be called an Apostle,”—nay, that he was “the chief of sinners.” No! there was no absolute perfection there! Nothing like it! And, where most like

it, it was solely through the strength vouchsafed him; “by the grace of God, I am what I am.”

As for ourselves, my brethren, our daily confession is, that we have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and done those things which we ought not to have done, and there is no health in us. We ask continually, as we have need to ask, for pardon for sins, negligences, and ignorances. There is nothing for us, even for the saintliest, but to abhor ourselves, and repent in dust and ashes.

No! Only He Who, as on this day, passed into the heavens to take His place at the right hand of God, could say to Him the All-holy, “I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do.” He had come into this world and lived in it for no other purpose. It was His “meat and drink” to do His Father’s will; every day, and all day; wherever He was, whatever He was doing, *that* was the one thing thought of. That was His sole purpose, alike in His labours of teaching, and in His miracles of love; alike as He entered Jerusalem in His triumph, or hung in His agony on the Cross. And as His purpose was, such was His performance; “I have glorified Thee on

earth ; I *have* finished the work that Thou gavest me to do."

With His sinless obedience He glorified His Father ; with His death upon the Cross, He finished His work—finished all that Justice demanded for the expiation of a fallen world ; finished all that love could do here on earth for the redemption of our race. And having done all, He left us for awhile, leaving us an example that we should follow His steps ; that we should do our best to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord, and to work on for God, as obediently, submissively, faithfully, constantly, lovingly, as He did.

His work was, I repeat, what ours can never be, however high our aims, and devoted our life—*perfect*. And first, by His Resurrection from the dead ; and next, by His ascension into Heaven, which we are now commemorating, we have the fullest evidence not only that He had wholly and entirely glorified His Father on earth, and finished His allotted work, but that His work was *accepted* as being perfect.

Ours can never be perfect. And therefore for us He had still work to do. When His work on earth was finished, He had yet another work to accomplish elsewhere, which the perfection of

His work on earth gave Him the prerogative to carry out as the Man, Christ Jesus, the one perfect man, in the Heaven of Heavens.

For, as you all know, He ascended "into Heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God, *for us*." At the right hand of the Father He standeth now, to succour all those that suffer for Him; to plead the merits of His own sufferings on our behalf, and to be the righteous Advocate for us poor sinners. As on earth He died, in order to pay the penalty of our sins, so in Heaven He ever liveth to make intercession for us. He is the one Mediator—the Peace-maker between God and man; and in that work of Intercession and Mediation, will that boundless love of His be employed, till the Judgment is past, the number of the Elect completed, the destined purposes of love accomplished, the Mediatorial kingdom ended, and "God, shall be all in all."

O! what blessed consolations spring from the knowledge of that Intercession, without which there could be no hope for any of us, with our miserably defective repentances, imperfect prayers, and backsliding attempts at amendment.

No hope but *in* Christ! No way but *through* Christ! But in Him, and through Him, *all* we need; and if we be found in Him, no fear but

that a place also will be found for us among the “many mansions;” no fear but that with Him we shall continually dwell ; that where He is, we shall be also.

But ah ! what need is there of incessant watchfulness, and care, and prayer for help, that we may be enabled so far to glorify His name, and to finish His work, as that we do not put it out of His power to intercede for us.

Day by day, hour by hour, let us keep that thought before us, and strive with anxious, earnest, loving, trustful hearts, to be of the number of those on whose behalf the great Intercession was offered : “ Father ! I will that they whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory !”

## SERMON XXIX.

### THE INFLUENCE OF THE PROMISES.

(FOR THE SUNDAY AFTER ASCENSION DAY.)

JOHN xiv. 3.

*"I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."*

EXCEEDING great and precious are the promises of God. His word is teeming with them from the beginning to the end. In the Scriptures of the Old Testament, those are the fullest of encouragement and consolation which point onward to Christ and His Kingdom; in those of the New, the promises of Christ Himself, and of His Holy Spirit, speaking by the mouths of His Apostles, point to measures of greater blessedness in and through Him, than but for Him, we could ask, or think.

And, perhaps, it is not too much to say, that manifold and inestimable as they are, they are all contained, directly or indirectly, in the short text I have just read. In it, are summed up—as it were—all man's needs, and the promise

how they shall be relieved. The total of all our needs is Christ; He is All-powerful to relieve them; He is most willing to relieve them; and, because our greatest need is that we should be with Him for ever,—He promises His faithful servants that they shall not be kept apart from Him for long. He has only left them for a little while, in order that He may plead the merits of His Cross and Passion on their behalf, and intercede for them with His Father; but, saith He, “I will come again, and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.”

A more precious promise than this could not be made. And it came from the lips of Him who is faithful and true, Who is the truth itself. Now, then, let us each of us ask himself,—“What is this promise to me? Has it any influence over my daily life? As I look into my heart, do I find the desire paramount there, that I should be where Christ is, that I should be with Him eternally?”

Every man—whatever his life—hopes, when he dies, to find a place in Heaven. That is to say, when he is worn out with the miseries of age; or the racking pain of organic disease; or has survived all who were dear to him; or has

nothing to expect here but trouble or disgrace ; or, in short, to use the common expression,—has nothing left to live for ; then he grows indifferent to life, and thinks he would be glad of a change which should bring him to some place where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.

No one can have attended the death-beds of men who have lived without God, and who, by natural consequence, are dying without Him, but must have met with such cases very frequently. Hearts hardened by the world,—the light within darkened by forgetfulness of God,—consciences seared and deadened by long-continued habits of wilful sin ; these things produce a fatal lethargy in the soul. Nothing will awaken or arouse it, and though death is known to be inevitable, its approach is waited for stolidly and apathetically, and apparently without much fear or repugnance.

These may be said to be extreme cases. It is to be hoped that they are. Nevertheless, it is greatly to be feared, that, even among those who are not living in forgetfulness of God, the desire for Heaven is frequently grounded on very low views,—upon something far short of what it ought to be. That which is allowable as a sub-

ordinate motive, is exalted into a principal one. And Heaven is desired, not because the presence of God and the Lamb is to be found therein, but because the mourner hopes to rejoin some one, of whom he has made an idol here upon earth.

And, therefore, it is of urgent necessity, that we should ascertain truly and honestly, to what it is that we are looking, as the thing which will make Heaven to be Heaven to us. To what do we look then, as constituting the chief happiness there? Is it that there you will be ever with the Lord? that you will meet your Saviour face to face, and be with Him continually? Do you desire to be there, because there you will be free from sin? That you will escape the snares and temptations of the devil, and the treacheries of your own heart? Do you desire to be there, because it will bring you into closer communion with God,—that there will be no more trials to faith,—that you will be in the fruition of the fulness of light?

These are very needful inquiries for all times, for there is always a tendency in us to admit other motives than the highest. But now, at this present season of our Lord's Ascension into Heaven, it seems especially needful to dwell on them, lest that prayer should be a mere mockery

from our lips, in which we have besought God, that as we do believe His Son, our Lord, to have ascended into the heavens, so we may also in heart and mind thither ascend, and with Him continually dwell.

His gracious promise to His people, as we have heard it in the text, is this: “I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” To be with *Him*, as good Bishop Jeremy Taylor expressed it, is “to have days without night, joys without sorrow, sanctity without sin, charity without stain, possession without fear, society without envying, communication of joys, without lessening; it is to dwell in a blessed country where no enemy shall ever enter, and from whence no friend shall ever depart.” Surely it is better to be with Christ! Yes, and for this reason, that even if we had still all that measure of bliss, and were apart from Christ, our portion would *not* be *Heaven*. There is but one thing which makes *Heaven*, and that is the Presence of Christ, even as there is but one thing that can fit us for *Heaven*, and enable us to find our enjoyment there, and that is to have the mind of Christ.

And there is but one way to attain to the

mind of Christ ; and that is by a life of watchfulness and prayer ; of watchfulness, whereby, with unshrinking courage, we may look into our hearts, detect our evil motives, unholy desires, infirmities, and frailty ; and of prayer, continual, hearty, sincere, for the aid and help of the Holy Spirit, by Whose strength we may gain mastery over ourselves, and so our hearts may be changed and turned from love of sin to love of Christ. Such prayer, and such watching will, under Grace, help us to attain to that hard-learned lesson of obedience which we were sent into the world to learn. As Christ our Lord, and great Example, came here, not to do His own Will, but the Father's That sent Him, so our work is to deny ourselves, and contradict ourselves, and submit ourselves, and resign ourselves, till, like Him, we can say under all that God sees fit to lay on us : " Not My will, but Thine be done."

In proportion as we train ourselves to do God's will on earth, after the pattern and in the spirit, if not to the extent, to which the angels do it in Heaven, shall we be made meet to take our place with them in that world, in which everything is acting in obedience to the will of our Heavenly Father. And the reason that we shall be so fitted is,

because by learning obedience by the things which we suffer, we shall be made like unto Christ ; and it is to those who are made like unto Him, that He gives the promise that He will come again, and receive them to Himself, and that where He is they shall be also. And *that* shall be Heaven. Other bliss in addition there will be, imperishable joys in companionship with loved ones who have been removed from earth, joys more perfect and enduring than heart can think or tongue can tell ; but the joy of all joys will be that we shall be with Christ, with Him Who died for us and washed us from our sins in His own Blood—that we shall see His face, share His glory, and be safe with Him for ever.

Unto which blessed estate may He vouchsafe to bring us all—Who is the Aid of all that need, the Helper of them that flee to Him for succour, the Life of them that believe, and the Resurrection of the dead !

## SERMON XXX.

### THE CONFUSION AND RE-UNION OF TONGUES.

(FOR WHITSUNDAY.)

GENESIS xi. 9.

*"Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth."*

THE great miracle of this day naturally recalls to our thoughts, that other miracle which made it necessary. The remedy provided by the mercy of God, brings back to our recollections the malady which His righteous anger had inflicted more than two thousand years before. The Comforter at Pentecost, becomes the substitute of the Confounder who came down to see the city and the town which the rebellious race was erecting to defy Him.

Once, there was but one speech and language in all this world of ours ; and hereafter, in that other world to which, as I trust, we are on our way ; there will be but one ; for there we shall

all be one in Christ Jesus, and “God is not the Author of confusion, but of peace.”

Yet once, in His wise compassion, He made confusion, in order to prevent it ; He destroyed peace, that in the end He might restore it. The word Babel means confusion. Those who united to raise a tower, from which, in their vain imagination, they expected to force their way into Heaven itself, were punished for their act of presumption, by having their further union in *any* work rendered impossible. Their language was so confounded, that no man could understand his neighbour ; and from that hour, the multiplication of languages has been so perpetuated, that there is hardly a nation which has not a peculiar tongue of its own ; and where a nation is made up of many tribes, it frequently happens that each tribe speaks a different dialect.

What a living proof is this of God’s hatred of sin, manifested from generation to generation, by the punishment inflicted on that organ, the *tongue*—which, as we know to our cost, is what St. James declares it to be, “a world of iniquity.”

But, my brethren, the history of Babel is far more than a record of the defeated attempt of wicked men to accomplish an impossible folly. The building of that tower was the first great

act of presumptuous rebellion against God, subsequent to the Flood, and therefore it was meet that a measure of vengeance should fall on it, such as, while the world stood, should never perish from the memory of mankind. And, as God so often orders, the crime of these men became their punishment. "Let us make us a name," they cried, "*lest* we be scattered abroad upon the face of the earth." And this very thing it was that caused them to be so scattered. And, when language was confounded, those who understood each other kept together, parting from the rest, and seeking homes elsewhere.

Thus, apparently, God became, what St. Paul says He is not, the Author of confusion; but it was only in appearance. He who hath made of one blood all nations of men, did, by that exercise of His power, the best thing that could be done to check and retard the rapid growth of evil, and to prepare the means by which man might be brought back to obedience. While there was but one tongue, men easily corrupted each other; when there were many, evil communications were greatly hindered. But, even in judgment, God remembered mercy. Had He so willed, He might have taken away the gift of speech altogether; henceforth men might have

been dumb, or utterance might have been made agony to them.

But He forbore. He changed nothing, it may be, but the sound of the letters in the words spoken, and then in a moment the building of Babel ceased, for the builders could no longer communicate intelligibly with each other. He that taught Adam to speak, untaught Adam's offspring. Yet the one was as much an act of wisdom and love as the other. He marred the Babel-builders' work, but it was in order to mar their wickedness ; and meanwhile He had His own gracious designs for a remedy. And it was, as on this day of Pentecost, that that remedy was first applied.

Dear, indeed, would Babel have cost us, but for the miracle we are now commemorating—the Gift of Tongues ! Had those poor fishermen of Galilee, SS. Peter and John, or even St. Paul himself, to go through the operation of learning a new language, in the ordinary way, for each new region visited, the Apostles and their successors, however holy, and however zealous, could have done almost nothing for the conversion of the world. Half of Europe would scarcely yet have had tidings of a Saviour. The command, indeed, was, that they should go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. But, had

*CONFUSION AND RE-UNION OF TONGUES.* 227

there been no interruption of the ordinary state of things, the command could not have been obeyed. As it was, those cloven tongues of fire which, on this day, rested on the heads of the Apostles, undid, to as great an extent as will be permitted in this world, the confusion of Babel. So soon as the Apostles were filled with the Holy Ghost, they began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance, and ere the day was over, Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, Mesopotamians and Asians, Cyrenians and Egyptians, Italians, Cretans, and Arabians—yea, dwellers in every nation of the then known world, had heard and understood the glad tidings of salvation, and had been called to enter into the fold of Christ.

The machinery, however, once set in motion by the miracle of Pentecost, it became the office of the Church to keep it in motion, in active work, and good repair. God is not the Author of confusion, but of peace. He desires to offer to all men the blessing of peace, peace *in* Him, and *with* Him, through the Blood of the Cross ; and, my brethren, we may be quite sure of this, that every one of us, from highest to lowest, will have to give account hereafter, for what we have severally done according to our means, large or

small, for the spread of the Gospel kingdom, for helping forward its publication in lands where, as yet, heathenism prevails. What are we severally doing, to cause God's name to be known on earth? to proclaim His saving health to all nations?

We profess to look forward to a day when all nations and kindreds, and peoples and tongues, shall in one and the same strain, glorify God. Here, on earth, with stammering lips and various tongues, we can but render a discordant homage at best: what are we doing to swell the number of those who, in the one universal language of Heaven, shall join in the song of the redeemed, before the Throne of God?

And now, one consideration more with respect to Babel, which, at the present time, I should feel it a grievous neglect to omit. If that scene of confusion teaches anything to ourselves, I am sure it teaches this, that division of tongues most needs slacken any work.

Happy would it be for ourselves, and happy for our English Church, if we all spoke one language. While we are, as we are, so torn by dissensions, so harassed by religious disputes, so full of bitterness, so ready to impute evil motives, and to think and say all that is

bad and cruel of those who differ from us, we shall build nothing but confusion.

You will say, with St. Paul, that "there must be divisions among us." It always has been, always will be. It is one of the evils which God permits, in order that out of them He may winnow His own elect.

True : "it must needs be that offences come, but *woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!*" Now, are any of our tongues increasing strife and confusion? Are we putting stumbling-blocks in the way of any? Are we authors of confusion, or of peace?

Truth, indeed, *first*; and *then* peace! But I know not that we have any special vocation to judge in controversy at all. Rather, as it seems to me, is it better for us to be silent. There is no cowardice in this. We may keep our own opinions; but there is nothing to make it necessary that we should say much about them. You hear controversies on all sides; make up your minds that into controversy you will not enter. Do not meddle with it; least of all, in public. If you are called hard names in consequence, put up with it. If ill-natured things are said to you, bear it; if of you, forgive it. Never return railing for railing. If some clever repartee rises

to your lips, swallow it down. Pass no judgments. Always hope the best. Make all allowance for others,—none for yourselves. Pray for those who seem to hate you. Pray for those whom you think mistaken. Pray to be kept from error yourselves. Bear and forbear. Take your own course quietly. Obey the Church steadily. Submit to ill-usage patiently.

So will you be walking in your Saviour's steps: so shall you be children of your Father which is in Heaven: so will you be authors, not of confusion, but of Peace !

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